

TEACHER PREPARATION FOR A DIVERSE SOCIETY: IMMERSIVE LEARNING
EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY AS A MEANS OF
STRENGTHENING CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCE IN PRESERVICE TEACHERS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION
BY
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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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DEDICATION

This Doctoral Dissertation is dedicated with love and appreciation to my mother, my siblings, my niece, and my nephews. It is also dedicated to my loving family and friends that have been on this journey with me. The road has been long, with many twists and turns, but through it all, there have been words of encouragement, love, and support to complete each leg of the journey. Thank you for all that you've done to help me reach this goal.

A special note of dedication is to my late father. He understood the value of an education and its ability to take one many places in life. His life was spent encouraging and supporting many in their pursuit of knowledge. I am reminded of his words of wisdom and his own journey to completing his education.

My father began this journey with me, but was unable to complete it during his time on Earth. This was a dream that meant a great deal to us both and created a special bond between father and daughter. Thank you, Pops Baker!

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Dr. Eva Zygmunt, Committee Chair, Department of Elementary Education

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Dr. Beth Messner, Department of Communication Studies

I was first introduced to you through Dr. Eva. I was captivated and inspired by your work in the area of social justice and allowing the voices of marginalized, victimized persons to be heard. The power of stories resonates with me to this day. I appreciate the opportunity to learn from you and the invaluable feedback you provided.

Dr. Joseph McKinney, Department of Educational Leadership

School law has always been an area of interest. My coursework with you helped me to better understand the law, and fueled a desire to teach preservice teachers about its importance. I keep my knowledge of the law at the forefront. I am reminded of the importance of not only doing what is right for children, but what is within the law.

Dr. Winnie Mucherah, Department of Educational Psychology

I took my second course from you and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. That summer, you shed new light on the area of child and adolescent development which I had not considered in many years. Making the transition from teaching children to teaching preservice teachers required a new understanding of development. I gained that and much more through your teaching. My knowledge continued to increase throughout the SCC experience. I became an unofficial student, learning alongside the preservice teachers. Through your work, I have been reminded of the importance of understanding and applying theory to all that I do as an educator.

Dr. Susan Tancock, Department of Elementary Education

Reading opens doors to many worlds. I have always loved reading and seeing the faces of young learners light up when all of the pieces fall into place. I am grateful for the knowledge you have shared and your passion for using excellent children's literature in bridging cultures in the elementary classroom. You have challenged my thinking and asked key questions that helped me tell my story. Sharing in the SCC experience with you was not only a pleasure, but also a learning experience for me.

My Participants

I would like to extend a very special thank you to my four participants, who shared their experiences with me. Their living and breathing the SCC experience generated a wealth of information, which enriched my understanding. Their willingness to help in the process and share their lives was invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Rebekah

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ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Teacher Preparation for a Diverse Society: Immersive Learning Experiences Within the Context of Community as a Means of Strengthening Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Cultural Competence in Preservice Teachers

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DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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This study examined how preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implemented culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The study also sought to learn how interacting with the greater community strengthened the preservice teachers' abilities to implement culturally relevant pedagogy. Two research questions guided this study. To explore the concept of CRP in the elementary classroom, and how preservice teachers learn to include CRP, the following research questions were posed: 1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher's understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy? 2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher's ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?

The research study was qualitative and utilized case studies. Cases were analyzed within and across to discover how they were similar and how they were unique. Data was analyzed using qualitative methods, including open coding, to identify themes. The findings from the study are presented, along with implications for teacher preparation, and recommendations for further research.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Abstract.....	7
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	12
The Problem.....	12
Purpose of the Study.....	16
Background and Significance of the Study.....	16
What is culturally relevant pedagogy?.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	19
Assumptions of the Study.....	23
Limitations of the Study.....	24
Organization of the Study.....	24
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	25
History of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.....	25
Review of Literature.....	27
Increased diversity in schools.....	28
Lack of diversity in preservice teachers.....	29
Widening achievement gap.....	29
Increased need for teachers in high-needs areas.....	34
Perceptions of preservice teachers.....	35
Preparation of preservice teachers.....	37
Immersive learning experiences.....	50

Current success of culturally relevant pedagogy.....	53
Implications for teacher preparation.....	56
Further exploration of culturally relevant pedagogy.....	69
Summary.....	72
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES.....	75
Research Design.....	76
Participants.....	81
The Setting.....	85
Data Collection.....	88
Data Analysis.....	91
Summary.....	94
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION.....	95
Findings.....	95
Case Studies.....	96
Maya Williams.....	96
Hunter McAllister.....	118
Chloe Parker.....	137
Priscilla Fox.....	165
Summary.....	184
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	168
Summary.....	186
Purpose.....	186

Background.....	186
Procedures.....	187
Findings.....	187
School.....	188
Community.....	191
Relationships.....	193
Limitations of the Study.....	201
Conclusions.....	202
Implications for Teacher Preparation.....	204
Recommendations for Further Research.....	206
References.....	210
Appendix A: Informed Consent.....	220
Appendix B: Informed Consent Signature Page.....	222
Appendix C: Pre and Post Observation Questions.....	223
Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview	
Protocol.....	224

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Principles of the community teacher framework.....	52
Table 3.1 Data Collection.....	76
Table 3.2 Immersive Learning Experience Weekly Schedule.....	82

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Problem

It is the first day of school. A very excited, Ms. Jones, a brand new teacher, stands before her students, who are eagerly gazing back at her. As she ponders the magnitude of her task, educating the 25 young, impressionable children, she realizes the range of emotions that are running through her mind: excitement, fear, confidence, inadequacy, joy, and sadness.

She looks at the newly framed diploma on the wall, telling herself that she has the pedagogical knowledge to make a difference. She glances at the colorful bulletin boards, posters, and name tags on the desks. But something deep inside, tells her that she can expect to be challenged every day of the school year, in ways she cannot fathom.

Ms. Jones, a White, middle-class teacher, is standing before a classroom of students who do not look like her, or share a common background; many do not speak the same language. But she knows the commitment she has made, the signature on the contract, and the desire to make a difference in the lives of all who enter her classroom.

Ms. Jones is like many teachers. She has a passion for the profession, the knowledge of content and best practice, and the credentials. She wants nothing more than to be successful, but something is missing. Ms. Jones doesn't know how to make content relevant and engaging, given students' diverse backgrounds.

How is Ms. Jones going to help her students meet the academic standards expected by the school, the district, the state? How is she going to engage students in meaningful conversations about the world around them? How will Ms. Jones help all students feel welcome in her classroom, despite their differing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds?

Increasing diversity in classrooms has provided opportunities for teachers and students to engage in rich experiences that cross cultural lines. The problem is that many teachers who enter schools miss out on these opportunities because they are not equipped to create a classroom that embraces diversity and provides all students with culturally relevant learning experiences. It is important for teachers to understand culturally relevant pedagogical practices and successfully implement them in their classrooms. The daunting pressures of high-stakes testing, performance pay, and other issues, make teaching the basics challenging enough. Reaching and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, adds a special challenge for educators.

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) was introduced to the field in the 1990s (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Studies showed how teachers met the needs of CLD learners with successful implementation of CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Bergeron, 2008). Teachers who successfully

implement CRP understand that there has been a significant change in the student makeup (Duarte & Reed, 2004). CRP holds to the philosophy that all children can and will achieve success; this is accomplished by teaching to and through strengths of individual students and utilizing cultural referents. CRP maintains high expectations and standards for all students. It is important to challenge the social order by refusing to subscribe to a status quo mentality; CRP successfully accomplishes this (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). A need exists for preservice teachers to be prepared to incorporate CRP into daily practice (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Pappamihel, 2004; Bergeron, 2008)

Unfortunately, a disconnect exists between teachers' understanding of CLD learners, and their ability to incorporate teaching strategies, as it relates to cultural competence, culturally relevant pedagogical practices, and the widening achievement gap (Mendez, 2006; NCES, 2007). A majority of teachers enter the classroom with hopes of successfully teaching and reaching all students. However, several factors contribute to teachers' lack of success with CLD learners. These factors include increased diversity in schools, the widening achievement gap, and a lack of diversity in preservice teachers. To examine the context of CLD learners and promote their success in schools, it is important to look at these areas. Because of the changing demographics, colleges and universities must acknowledge the cultural differences of students and be proactive in preparing preservice teachers. The majority population is no longer White (NCES, 2007). Traditional dominant cultural values cannot be the sole basis for successful teaching. Williams (2011) found that students who are behind their peers, in terms of academic achievement, continue to do so. She also stated that culturally relevant teaching can help bridge the achievement gap. Students should also see themselves reflected in the classroom. This is not always possible, due to the lack of preservice teachers entering the field who represent minority

groups (Escamilla & Mathenson-Mejia, 2003). Increasing the number of preservice teachers of color is worthy of closer examination.

Many educators enter the classroom with perceptions about CLD students and how they should be taught. They bring inaccurate beliefs about the potential of diverse learners and achievement (Aaronsohn, Carter, & Howell, 1995; Benner & Mistry, 2007; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Failure to teach in ways that are culturally relevant to the diverse learners in their classrooms becomes a problem for schools across the nation (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). It is critical that all students entering classrooms are educated, and are expected to achieve at the highest possible level of achievement, no matter what their cultural or linguistic background may be.

Colleges and universities are faced with the challenge of preparing teachers for urban classrooms. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 set the standard for all students to achieve. Barnes (2006) and Crosby (1999) have shown it is increasingly important for teacher preparation programs to look more closely at theory. Crosby (1999) concluded that teacher training institutions have not placed enough emphasis on preparation of teachers for diverse settings. Barnes (2006) discovered a disconnect between theory and practice among preservice teachers. This stemmed from their limited cultural knowledge base and Eurocentric curricula and pedagogy. Barnes stated that teacher preparation programs must help teachers know more about the world around them. CRP enables teachers to deal with challenges because it supports and facilitates academic achievement of all students. Talbert-Johnson (2006) stated the following about research in teacher preparation programs:

A number of studies have offered empirical evidence that teacher education programs that have coherent visions of teaching and learning and that integrate related strategies

across courses and field placements have a greater impact on the initial conceptions and practices of prospective candidates than those that remain as a collection of relatively disconnected courses. (p. 147)

Integration of strategies for CRP across the curriculum, as opposed to single courses in multicultural education for preservice teachers is recommended. Programs must scaffold teaching and learning for preservice teachers. This should be done over several courses, not in isolation. Barnes (2006) concluded “these [teacher preparation] programs need to focus on developing a systematic, cohesive culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the entire curriculum” (p. 93). She recognized the challenge of changing attitudes in universities, especially when they had limited interaction with diverse populations. However, the ultimate responsibility for preparing culturally relevant teachers lies with institutions. Bakari (2003) concurred that preservice teachers must learn to cultivate positive attitudes towards students, particularly African Americans. Her research confirmed that a strong presence of cultural sensitivity is lacking in teacher education programs.

One way of ensuring successful classroom experiences for all learners, is to implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices. To explore the concept of CRP in the elementary classroom, and how preservice teachers learn to include CRP, the following research questions were posed: 1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher’s understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy? 2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher’s ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first objective was to examine how preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The second was to understand how interacting with the greater local community strengthens preservice teachers' ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP).

Background and Significance of the Study

Literature indicates that schools are becoming increasingly diverse; this is not going to change in the foreseeable future (Barnes, 2006; Ford & Dillard, 1996; Moule, 2012; Shrestha & Heisler, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Orfield and Lee (2007) stated,

The number of White students fell 20 percent from 1968 to 2005, as the baby boom gave way to the baby bust for White families, while the number of Blacks increased 33 percent and the number of Latinos soared 380 percent amid surging immigration of a young population with high birth rates. (p. 4)

Teachers are required to meet the educational needs of all learners. However, an achievement gap exists between CLD learners and their White peers (Gay, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). In many rural and urban areas, students are three to four years behind their suburban peers in all subjects; this gap has persisted more than 40 years (Jones, 2010). Orfield and Lee (2007) stated, "previous progress in narrowing racial achievement gaps from the 1960s well into the 1980s has ended and most studies find that there has been no impact from NCLB on the racial achievement gap" (p. 4) Teachers are under pressure to perform because of high-stakes testing, merit pay, and the ever-changing landscape of education. There is a lack of diverse candidates entering the teaching profession across the nation (Escamilla & Mathenson-Mejia, 2003). In 2003, the racial

makeup of the nation's teachers was as follows: 83.1% White, 7.9% Black, 1.3% Asian, 0.5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 6.2% Hispanic educators (NCES, 2007). Current data shows no significant change in these numbers. Teacher preparation programs are faced with changes in licensing mandates; the continued majority of White, female, middle-class teacher candidates; and the challenge of preparing highly-qualified, competent and caring educators.

What is culturally relevant pedagogy?

Teachers have the potential to teach and impact hundreds of students during their careers. Entering a classroom and greeting a fresh group of students is something teachers look forward to each year. In addition to excitement, many teachers feel the sense of pressure that comes from high-stakes testing, meeting the needs of all students, and creating a safe, supportive place for learning (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). All teachers must teach using the standards and engage learners through sound, instruction that follows best practice. With the increase of CLD learners, another dimension is added to the challenge of teaching and reaching all students (Ford & Dillard, 1996; Callins, 2006). Orfield and Lee (2007) noted the following about the changing demographics:

Compared to the civil rights era we have a far larger population of 'minority' children and a major decline in the number of White students. Latino students, who are the least successful in higher education attainment, have become the largest minority population.

(p. 4)

Teachers must find ways to address cultural differences and maintain high standards for instruction. Ladson-Billings (1995) found that one way of reaching and teaching students from diverse backgrounds is through CRP.

Ladson-Billings (1994) defines CRP as “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 17-18). It is a “theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469)

Ladson-Billings (1995) designed this study as a means of examining what successful teachers were doing and how they were meeting the academic needs of diverse learners. Her extensive work provided a framework for CRP and established three critical criteria for CRP:

Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order. (p. 160)

Bakari (2003), Greenman and Dieckmann (2004), and Talbert-Johnson (2006) have conducted additional studies to closely examine CRP and how it looks in classrooms with CLD learners. CRP classrooms are inclusive of diverse learners, highly engaging, and show that cultures and multiple perspectives are valued. Ladson-Billings seminal study has been the critical framework for deeper exploration of this theory. Findings from these subsequent studies have been helpful in identifying key principles of CRP. Principles include designing meaningful curriculum and assessments, communicating high expectations, differentiating instruction, and working collaboratively with peers. It is also important to know the families and communities of students; identify student strengths, values, and priorities; and involve parents as much as possible in the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Williams, 2011).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are relevant to this study and provide a context for understanding.

Achievement gap – “difference between how well low-income and minority children perform on standardized tests as compared with their peers. For many years, low-income and minority children have been falling behind their White peers in terms of academic achievement” (US DOE, 2012).

Circle of practice – “the relationship between college and school partners that permits interrogation of practice in professional activity settings” (Murrell, 2001, p. 40).

Color-blind/color-blindness – “the idea that ignoring or overlooking racial and ethnic differences promotes racial harmony” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2012).

Community teacher – “one who possesses contextualized knowledge of a culture, community, and identity of the children and families he or she serves and draws on this knowledge to create the core teaching practices necessary for effectiveness in diverse setting[s]” (Murrell, 2001, p. 52)

Community of practice – “group of individuals bound together in a mutual activity with mutual exchange of ideas, values, and actions toward a common purpose or set of purposes....This group creates a new common space—a new context of professional activity where the interests of people in higher education, parents, school people, and other personnel come together” (Murrell, 2001, p. 42)

Conceptual Framework – Student-created concept map to demonstrate emerging understandings about what an individual is experiencing and learning. Concept maps are to be updated weekly throughout the semester, using mind mapping software. All concept maps should address three major themes: children & families, schools, and communities (BSU SCC, 2012)

Courageous Conversations – “a strategy for breaking down racial tensions and raising racism as a topic of discussion that allows those who possess knowledge on particular topics to have the opportunity to share it, and those who do not have the knowledge to learn and grow from the experience” (Singleton & Hays, 2008, p. 18).

Critical race theory (CRT)— “consists of five elements focusing on: (a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective” (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1999). The CRT framework places race and racism in the foreground by challenging the traditional paradigms, methods, and texts that impact communities of color.

Cultural competence/competency - “the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than your own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awarenesses and sensitivities, learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching” (Moule, 2012, p.11).

Cultural discontinuity – occurs when preservice teachers “have negative beliefs and low expectations of success for...[non White] students even after some course work in multicultural education” (Irvine, 2003, p. xvi).

Culture – “ideations, symbols, behaviors, values, and beliefs that are shared by a human group. Culture may also be defined as the symbols, institutions, or other components of human societies that are created by human groups to meet their survival needs” (Banks, 2005, p. 133).

Cultural diversity – “the array of differences that exist among groups of people with definable and unique cultural backgrounds” (Moule, 2012, p. 11).

Culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLD) - “students who may be distinguished [from the mainstream culture] by ethnicity, social class, and/or language” (Perez, 1998, p. 6); “may refer to students who are from racial/ethnic minority groups, students whose primary language is not English, and students who are from low-income or poor households” (Terry & Irving, 2010, p. 110).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) – “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp17-18). The “theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469).

Disequilibrium – feelings experienced when an individual encounters an event that is unfamiliar and does not fit into their schema. Individuals may remain in this state until they assimilate or familiarize themselves with their surroundings (Bergeron, 2008; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007).

Educational equity – a federally mandated right to equal access; this includes classes, facilities, and programs. No student may be denied these rights based on race, gender, socioeconomics, or abilities (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Hidden curriculum – “the unstated but influential knowledge, attitudes, norms, rules, rituals, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through structure, policies, processes, formal content, and the social relationships of school” (Irvine, 2003, p. 5).

Immersive learning experience - “melds content, skills, societal need, and... interests into an intense, transformative experience” (BSU, 2012).

Inservice teachers - “education professionals and paraprofessionals working in participating schools ... including principals or other heads of a school, teachers, other professional instructional staff” (USDOE, 2012).

Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) – “an interactive process in which the apprentice engages by simultaneously performing in *several roles*—status subordinate, learning practitioner, sole responsible agent...aspiring expert” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 23).

Multicultural education —“educational reform movement whose major goal is to restructure curricula and educational institutions so that students from diverse social-class, racial, and ethnic groups—as well as both gender groups—will experience equal educational opportunities” (Banks, 2005, p. 135).

Multiculturalism— belief that multiple cultures can coexist peacefully and equitably in society (Sleeter, 2001).

Preservice teacher – an individual enrolled in a college or university teacher education program; candidates are preparing themselves, through coursework and participation in schools, for a career in teaching in P-12 classrooms (NCATE, 2012).

Self-fulfilling prophecy – “a *false* definition of the situation evoking a new behavior, which makes the originally false conception come *true*” (Merton, 2010, p.175).

Situated learning – “*learning* located squarely in the process of coparticipation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 13).

Theory – “a general principle or set of principles that explains facts or events” (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

University-community-school partnership framework – “successful collaboration of university, community, and school partners for meeting the conjoint aims of improving schooling practices and teacher education” (Murrell, 2001, p. 5).

Assumptions of the Study

For this study, certain assumptions had to be acknowledged. Assumptions of this study were:

- 1) Participants are influenced by their own culture and beliefs.
- 2) Participants bring certain beliefs about all students when they enter the classroom.
- 3) Stereotypes exist among preservice teachers about culturally and linguistically diverse learners.
- 4) The school setting will provide ample opportunities for participants to plan and teach lessons using strategies of CRP, with fidelity.
- 5) The school population is representative of culturally and/or linguistically diverse learners.
- 6) CRP strategies can be identified and evidenced through observations.
- 7) Observations, interviews, focus groups, journals, audio recordings, and videotapes are the most appropriate methods for data collection and identifying CRP.
- 8) Participants will be transparent in acknowledging their thoughts and feelings about CLD learners and CRP.
- 9) Participants will immerse themselves in the experience and be open to opportunities for learning.

Limitations of the Study

This study was designed to develop or contribute to the transferability of knowledge that preservice teachers acquire about CRP through immersive learning experiences with CLD learners. The following were limitations to the study:

- 1) The setting is one school in a particular community, which may not be representative of all schools.
- 2) This is a sample of convenience; participants are not randomly assigned.
- 3) Participation in immersive learning experiences is voluntary; participants are interviewed by faculty members, and officially accepted into the program.
- 4) Observations are limited to the length of the lesson being taught by the participant.
- 5) The length of the immersive experience is one semester. Analysis of the long-term effects requires additional time.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the purpose of the study, the background and significance of the study, the research questions, definition of terms, assumptions, and limitations. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature related to culturally relevant pedagogy. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, including the participants, the setting, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 reports the results of the investigation and Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, implications of the study, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first objective was to examine how preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The second was to understand how interacting with the greater local community strengthens preservice teachers' ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). To understand the need for research in this area, it was critical to look at the history of CRP, and what the literature said about increased student diversity, the makeup of teachers entering the workforce, the widening achievement gap, and teacher expectations. Teacher preparation programs' failure to evaluate current programs, lower teacher expectations and negative stereotypes, and a lack of meaningful field experiences with culturally diverse learners can prohibit the successful preparation of preservice teachers and the ability to successfully interact with CLD learners (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005).

History of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The face of education has changed in various ways. Student populations are becoming more diverse; the achievement gap between diverse learners and their White peers is widening. Despite the changes in the student makeup, the majority of persons entering the teaching profession continue to be White, middle-class females. Therefore, it is important to examine why CRP is important to teaching. Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested a new theoretical perspective to address concerns about teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Her work in the area of successful practices with African American students led to CRP. She defined CRP as "a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). To clearly articulate how CRP looks,

feels, and sounds in an elementary classroom, she conducted an extensive study with eight teachers over a two-year period. Ladson-Billings conducted an ethnographic study to identify, formulate, and confirm CRP practices by identifying and cross comparing the work of effective teachers. Three broad propositions emerged from the research and center on conceptions of self and others, manner in which social relations are structured, and conceptions of knowledge culturally relevant teachers hold.

Ladson-Billings (1995) concluded that the culturally relevant teacher must exemplify the following, in terms of conceptions of self and others: a belief that all students can achieve academic success, view pedagogy as an art, see themselves as members of the community, see teaching as a means of giving back to the community, and belief in Freire's notion of teaching as mining. Teachers must be spontaneous, full of energy, and willing to take risks; this includes making critical decisions within lessons that bridge gaps between content and student schema.

Ladson-Billings found social relations to be critical to the work of culturally relevant teachers. She stated, “culturally relevant teachers consciously create social interactions to help them meet...academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness” (p. 480). In essence, successful teachers must maintain fluid relationships, demonstrate connectedness, develop a community of learners, and encourage collaboration and responsibility. Culturally relevant teachers hold students to high expectations; refuse to water-down the curriculum, and embrace an ethos of working together for success.

The third proposition, conceptions of knowledge, rests on the following tenets: knowledge is not static, it must be viewed critically, teachers must be passionate about their work, scaffolding and building bridges is critical, and assessment must be multifaceted. Knowledge has to be about doing; gaining knowledge is not a passive experience. Students must

be encouraged to ask “Why?” in their exploration and acquisition of knowledge. This deepens their understanding and experience. Teachers who employ CRP are not afraid to stand up for what is right in the curriculum and seek challenging opportunities for students to explore and engage in learning.

Ladson-Billings admitted that her work was only a beginning in the process of understanding CRP. In addition to the three distinguishing propositions of CRP, she identified three criteria that must be present in culturally relevant teaching. She stated, “culturally relevant teaching must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness” (p.483). Many have followed her quest for understanding what constitutes good CRP (Bakari, 2003; Barnes, 2006; Bennett, 2008; Bergeron, 2008; Brown, 2004; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Dee & Henkin, 2002; Duarte & Reed, 2004; Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejia, 2003; Ford & Dillard, 1996; Greenman & Dieckmann, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Mendez, 2006; Nichols, et al., 2000; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Tyler & Boelter, 2008, and Young, 2010).

Review of Literature

Students entering schools today are more diverse, in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, and language than ever before (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005). National statistics showed the student population in 2003 included 40% minority students; projected statistics for the nation’s population will reach 47% or higher by 2050 (NCES, 2007; Riche, 2000). As schools change, teacher preparation programs are charged with assessing how they are preparing preservice teachers for effectively teaching CLD students. Developing CRP and best practices in the classroom is critically germane to teacher preparation (Brown-Jeffy &

Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRP is often used interchangeably with culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). For the purpose of this review of literature, CRP will be used to represent collective theories.

There are several reasons why enacting CRP in classrooms is important. Among those are increasingly more diverse schools, little to no change in the teacher workforce; increased need for teachers in urban, high-need areas; and the widening achievement gap (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Ford & Dillard, 1996; Gay, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). When considering CRP and attempting to enact the strategies in classrooms, these trends must be explored in greater detail.

Increased diversity in schools

Research shows that schools are becoming increasingly more diverse; the racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural makeup of schools has changed in the last century; and schools are seeing an increase of CLD learners (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Ford & Dillard, 1996). The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) reported that the 2003 public school enrollment was 60.3% White, 16.8% Black, 17.7% Hispanic, 1.3% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 3.9% Asian/Pacific Islander. The minority student population is expected to increase as the nation's population becomes more diverse. It is projected that by the year 2050, minorities will constitute 47% of the general population (Riche, 2000). Students entering the classroom possess a variety of cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences. Teachers have a responsibility to reach and teach all students in their classrooms. To address the needs of diverse learners, teachers must look at strengths and the cultural capital students bring to school, and use these as the basis for good instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nichols, et al., 2000).

Colleges and universities are recognizing the importance of preparing preservice teachers for effectively teaching CLD students. One avenue to success is making CRP and best practices in the classroom integral to teacher preparation (Barnes, 2006; Dee & Henkin, 2002; Duarte & Reed, 2004).

Lack of diversity in preservice teachers

Despite the changing face of student learners and increasing diversity, there has been little demographic shift in the majority of candidates entering the teaching profession (Swartz, 2003). The vast majority of the teaching force remains predominantly White, female, and middle class (Barnes, 2006). Data show that the minority population in US schools has increased to approximately 40%, but the number of minority teachers continues to decrease (Capps et al., 2005; NCES, 2007). The presence of minority teachers in schools is limited; thus, diversity among preservice teachers is still at a minimum. Given the lack of diversity of individuals entering the profession, colleges and universities must be increasingly aware of teacher candidates' backgrounds and carefully evaluate how they are connecting theory and practice, relative to multiculturalism.

Widening achievement gap

The achievement gap between White and non-White students is widening (NCES, 2007; Mendez, 2006; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). There is also strong evidence that shows teachers hold lower expectations for CLD learners than their White peers (Tyler & Boelter, 2008). One of the most critical issues in US education is how to meet the needs of CLD learners (Bowman, 1994). Research findings indicate that student achievement is closely connected to teacher expectations (Goldenberg, 1992; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Low expectations lead to low achievement in students; high expectations lead to higher academic achievement. Tyler and Boelter, (2008)

recognized that there are also connections between a student's performance, their feelings of self-efficacy, and their level of academic engagement. These factors are statistically associated with academic performance. Teacher expectations affect student engagement and efficacy. Tyler and Boelter's work confirmed the previous findings of other researchers. A major contribution of their study showed "perceived teacher expectations were predictive of what the literature considered to be cognitive antecedents of student academic performance, namely academic engagement and academic efficacy" (p. 38). These findings were consistent with the work of Benner and Mistry (2007) and Hughes, Gleason, and Zhang (2005), who found a direct correlation between teacher expectations and increased student achievement.

There also is a correlation between the widening achievement gap and the absence of cultural themes and history from the curriculum (Mendez, 2006). For example, Calexico High School incorporated cultural literature into the existing curriculum as an effective means of introducing cultural themes and history, as well as bridging the achievement gap (Mendez, 2006). Students excelled because they were familiar with their culture; they responded to constructivist and cognitive learning theory; education was presented as more than transmission of facts; and they were not resistant to education they viewed as valuable to their well-being. Establishing meaningful links between home and school, especially for CLD learners, is critical. Mendez concluded that students benefit from connections between culture and content. Other researchers have found the effectiveness of CRP in raising student achievement and narrowing the gap (Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Tyler & Boelter, 2008).

Reading instruction is an excellent time to enact CRP in a classroom with diverse learners. It can expose them to good literature that portrays various cultures in positive light. Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia (2003) examined the effectiveness of this in a study with

preservice teachers. Latino literature was part of the preservice teachers' seminar, during their field experience. The study showed that using multicultural literature heightened sensitivity in preservice teachers and increased their awareness of the importance of CRP. Findings also showed the importance of coupling literature with additional teaching about the culture (e.g., history, customs). Thus, classroom teachers can use reading instruction as another opportunity to build cultural competence, increase academic achievement, and develop literacy skills.

Evidence also indicates that narrowing the achievement gap also may be accomplished by using CRP in schools (DeCuir-Gunby, Taliaferro, & Greenfield, 2010). The NCLB Act (2001) defined the achievement gap as the difference in performance between ethnic groups. One solution offered by NCLB was to eliminate the bigotry of low expectations, demand stronger accountability from schools and teachers, and demand that schools close the gap between African American and White students. Thus, it is important for exploration into how the gap can be closed and implement substantive efforts.

The American Excellence Association (AEA) is a program designed to address the achievement gap from a strengths-based, culturally relevant perspective. The lens of CRP is used throughout the program to inspire and increase student achievement. In their recent study, DeCuir-Gunby, Taliaferro, and Greenfield closely examined the AEA program, its components, and success in schools, through a qualitative study. The data gathered through focus groups and interviews showed that CRP was a valid means of narrowing the achievement gap. They found that promoting academic achievement was accomplished when African American students felt a sense of belonging and cultural competence. A central understanding of CRP is that cultural understanding is critical to academic success. Students need to feel included in the academic setting and have cultural referents to support their academic endeavors.

DeCuir-Gumby, Taliaferro, and Greenfield (2010) also learned that African American students excelled when they experienced a sense of critical consciousness through community service. The AEA students experienced a strong commitment to social change in their school and community. Several chapters of AEA embraced the challenge of increasing academic success in others through tutoring and mentoring programs. These endeavors to reach out broadened the community circle of learners and challenged many to reach higher levels of academic achievement.

DeCuir-Gunby, Taliaferro, and Greenfield (2010) found that programs such as AEA were essential to awakening a sense of critical consciousness in students of color. Programs like AEA offer students “the context for equal access and participation, thereby enabling students of color to function as operational citizens of the school polity” (p. 198). Specifically, they found that engagement in programs that promote CRP and focus on narrowing the achievement gap have life-long implications that impact the future of CLD learners.

Tyson (2002) demonstrated that African American elementary students begin their educational careers focused on learning and achievement. Significant changes occur in students which can partially be attributed to the current climate of many schools. CRP offers a valuable approach to “creating affirming and educationally sound classroom spaces for African American children throughout their educational career” (DeCuir-Gunby, Taliaferro, & Greenfield, 2010, p. 195). Valuing culture within the context of instruction can positively impact academic achievement.

The appearance of the achievement gap did not happen suddenly; rather it began early in the educational careers of CLD learners and has continued to grow. Williams (2011) explored teacher quality in an attempt to identify the cause of the achievement gap. Knowledge of subject

matter does not always translate into higher levels of academic achievement. Researchers (Johnson, 2009; Wenglinsky, 2002) found that strong teacher-student relationships positively affected achievement. Standards-based instruction coupled with quality, caring teachers has positive effects on narrowing the achievement gap (Williams, 2011).

Johnson (2009) noted that classroom teachers must feel competent in order to establish positive relationships with students, increase motivation, and create change in the classroom. This competence requires the support of administrators and others to help drive teachers' motivation to take on the challenge of closing the gap. This includes looking at teacher training programs and implementing new strategies that transform learning for students. Programs must be evidenced-based, teach to student strengths, and incorporate techniques that lead to increased achievement. It is also important to eliminate racial stereotypes about CLD learners. Williams discovered that "when Black students are able to affirm their sense of themselves and feel valued, their achievement increases in school" (p. 67). These findings supported the framework of CRP proposed by Ladson-Billings. Students need to feel valued in order to experience success.

If current achievement trends continue, diverse learners will not obtain the education needed to fully participate in economic and civic life (Mendez, 2006). Schools interested in promoting success among CLD learners do not have a simple task on their hands. True change is multifaceted and requires emphasis on prevention, enhancement of early (preschool) experiences, authentic assessments of at-risk students, listening to the voices of minorities, changing how schools interact with community institutions (collaboration), and preparation of teachers and schools to educate the greater range of students (Bowman, 1994).

Addressing the achievement gap in a culturally relevant way requires setting high expectations for all students. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) have articulated specific standards and indicators for teachers. An important component of the standards is the teachers' responsibility to promote equitable practices for all students (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). In light of NCLB, it becomes increasingly important to provide diverse learners with highly-qualified, culturally relevant teachers, who will hold students to the highest standards of achievement.

Increased need for teachers in high-needs areas

A large number of teaching jobs are in urban, high-needs areas (Duarte & Reed, 2004). Urban districts report growing rates of teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Perda, 2009). Over the past decade, attrition has remained at a constant level of 50% or higher (Nieto, 2003). These schools have high populations of diverse learners, and may be deemed low-performing or failing by their respective states (Duarte & Reed, 2004). The common underpinning of CRP should be classroom practice grounded in the belief that students are educable (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As the need for highly-qualified teachers in urban settings continues to grow, reaching culturally diverse students is a must (Nichols, et. al., 2000).

It is important to make the classroom environment and instructional practices consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse learners by fostering CRP in future teachers. The key to student achievement is systemic reform through multiple aspects; systemic reform should come through curriculum instruction, administration, assessment, and financing (Barnes, 2006). Teaching methods that look beyond the basics, seeking new ways of meeting student

needs, are critical to this agenda for action. This will allow future teachers to gain valuable opportunities to experience urban settings.

Perceptions of preservice teachers

Effective teachers must possess a solid understanding of their students, their needs, and their abilities, to maximize learning opportunities. However, many teachers do not have positive images about diverse learners, and carry negative stereotypes into the classroom (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005). Basing expectations on stereotypes about a students' culture is a dangerous practice. Clifton (1982) concluded, "[when] teachers' expectations [are] based upon the ethnic background rather than upon the intellectual ability, academic performance, educational plans, then equality of educational opportunity may be threatened" (p.37).

This lack of understanding can lead to lower expectations for student achievement. A teacher's personal beliefs significantly influence their practice, and subsequent student behavior and instructional decision-making (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). Many future teachers assume their upbringing is "typical" or "normal." They believe that their task as educators is to socialize students into the norm or mainstream of society; thus, they fail to recognize their students' culture. Irvine (2003) referred to this as cultural discontinuity, which can have negative effects on educators. Cultural discontinuity affects teacher attitudes and expectations, which influence students' academic performance. As a result, preservice teachers may affirm the idea that cultural difference equals inferiority. Additionally, cultural discontinuity can lead to negative interactions between students and teachers, which may simply reinforce stereotypes and prejudices in both parties.

There is strong evidence showing that preservice teachers do hold stereotyped beliefs. Specifically, researchers (Aaronsohn, Carter, & Howell, 1995; and Barnes, 2006) contend that

many preservice teachers hold stereotypical views of urban education environments. According to the researchers, preservice teachers consistently stereotyped students based on race and socioeconomics; these teachers also displayed biased behaviors and attitudes during field placements. Expectations for students' achievement level and students' considered at-risk because of socioeconomics are among the common misconceptions preservice teachers carry into classrooms with CLD learners (Barnes, 2006; Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Gay, 2002). Students labeled as *at-risk*, *culturally disadvantaged*, and *culturally deprived* fall victim to teacher stereotypes and are denied opportunities to engage in higher-level, challenging educational activities (Irvine, 2003). Many teachers display negative attitudes toward culturally diverse learners. Much of this stems from what Irvine refers to as the hidden curriculum that exists in schools. This hidden curriculum creates different experiences between students in upper and lower socioeconomic schools.

To secure the success of diverse learners, a shift in preservice teachers' attitudes about teaching, learning, and culture, must occur (Bakari, 2003). They must understand students' and their backgrounds to enact culturally relevant teaching. Irvine (1990) argued that a lack of sensitivity among White preservice teachers and their tendency to misinterpret verbal and non-verbal cues leads to conflict in the classroom. Teacher preparation programs should include experiences that allow preservice teachers to explore, discuss, and really understand diverse learners and their backgrounds.

Once preservice teachers begin to understand the complexity of culture, they recognize its influence on educational growth of their students. They also begin to see the positive influence of cultural referents and background experiences can have on teaching and learning.

The students' cultural capital and background of experiences yield positive influences on the teaching and learning process (Barnes, 2006).

One negative outcome of teacher expectations is the overrepresentation of minorities in settings that do not encourage high achievement. Talbert-Johnson (2006) found that schools disproportionately place African American and poor students in low-ability and special education courses. Teachers must be cognizant of the wide range of students they plan to teach. Banks et al. (2005) found a direct connection between teacher expectations and student success:

All teachers must be prepared to take into account the different experiences and academic needs of a wide range of students as they plan and teach. When teachers use knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of their students when planning and implementing instruction, the academic achievement of students can increase. It is basically the imperative that teachers know their students well and believe that all students can learn and achieve high levels of academic success. (Banks, p. 233)

It is important for teachers to know their students, their background of experiences, and strengths.

Preparation of preservice teachers

Dee and Henkin (2002) conducted a study of preservice teachers to assess their dispositions toward cultural diversity. The preservice teachers attended an urban university; graduates of the program worked in very diverse schools. The study included 150 teacher education majors who were preparing to take the multicultural education sequence of coursework; none of the students had prior experience in multicultural education. Participants included 70.3% females; 42.2% were over the age of 24. The majority of the participants

(55.6%) identified themselves as Hispanic; the remaining participants were White (28.9%) and African American (13.4%). The proposed license areas included special education, English/foreign languages, elementary education, mathematics/science, social studies, physical education, and art/music. For the purpose of this study, cultural diversity was defined as “perceived deviations from White, middle-class, monolingual backgrounds” (p. 25). Supportive attitudes and comfort level with diversity (dependent variable) was measured using Stanley’s (1996) Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (PADAA). This instrument measured the following in relation to cultural diversity: appreciation; value; implementation; and comfort level. Independent variables were student characteristics (i.e., race, gender, age) and experience. Social interaction attitudes were measured by the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire (MAQ) (Giles & Sherman, 1982). The MAQ measured each participant’s levels of interest in engaging casual and personal activities with CLD individuals. Surveys were completed by participants during the first meeting of the course.

According to Dee and Henkin, results of the MAQ indicated respondents strongly agreed with equity beliefs or that there were equal opportunities in education. Participants showed a supportive attitude toward introducing diversity into the content curricula. In terms of comfort/ease of interacting with CLD individuals, the scores were lower. Scores were also lower in the participants’ belief that people should adopt the norms of the dominant culture; this indicates strong support for teaching approaches that promote cultural pluralism versus assimilation.

Personal characteristics and experiences of the participants showed 43.5% did not grow up in very diverse settings; however, a greater percentage presently worked with CLD co-workers (55.0%). A large percentage (43.2%) of the participants considered their friends to be

diverse. Those responding indicated a greater interest in casual engagement, rather than personal engagement with CLD individuals. Data also revealed a significantly lower level of agreement with assimilation by special education candidates over elementary education candidates. Dee and Henkin found the same was true for African American candidates, versus White candidates.

Bakari (2003) conducted a study of 415 preservice teachers from six universities (i.e., predominantly White public and private institutions; historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU)). Findings confirmed previous research and identified problems with the attitudes of preservice teachers in working with African American students (Beauboeuf-LaFontant, 1999; Diller, 1999; Hilliard, 1995; Irvine, 1990). Bakari noted shortcomings about the participants, including a lack of sensitivity toward cultural needs, expectations, willingness to teach, and teacher efficacy. A call to refine teacher preparation programs and preservice teachers' attitudes toward culturally diverse learners was issued by several researchers throughout the 1990s (Beauboeuf-LaFontant, 1999; Diller, 1999; Hilliard, 1995; Irvine, 1990); this prompted Bakari to look at preservice teachers and culturally relevant teaching.

Bakari administered the Teaching African American Students Survey (TAASS) to all participants. The TAASS consists of two subscales to assess Willingness to Teach African American Students (WTAAS) and Cultural Sensitivity Toward Teaching African American Students (CSTAAS). Findings reinforced the need for teacher preparation programs to cultivate positive attitudes among preservice teachers, particularly toward diverse learners. White teachers with exposure to African American students earned the lowest score in terms of willingness to teach; the difference in attitudes among preservice teachers, raised concern about the impact of race and culture in teacher preparation. In terms of cultural sensitivity, she noted little effort from preservice teachers to utilize culture in the classroom. There was an alarmingly significant

degree of lesser sensitivity from HBCU students in their willingness to teach African American students. Bakari concluded that a lack of cultural sensitivity is not limited to White preservice teachers, but also exists among minority teachers.

Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia (2003) explored the disparity between those entering the teaching force and the cultural makeup of students in classrooms, and how to prepare culturally relevant teachers. Their work utilized multicultural literature, discussion and reflection, and multicultural field experiences as a way to build background and connections of preservice teachers to their diverse learners. Dana and Lynch-Brown (1993) deemed children's literature to be a powerful tool in deepening teachers understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy; Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia sought to better understand this in their study.

Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia learned that multicultural literature has the ability to change minds and eventually change hearts, thus benefiting diverse learners. The focus of the study was to prepare mostly White preservice teachers to be culturally responsive teachers by creating, "learning and teaching situations designed to develop passion and heart...and to foster a knowledge base about diverse culture" (p. 240). The focus was Latino literature, because of the surrounding school district's demographics. Participants included 27 teacher candidates completing their school-based field-work experience as part of the graduate teacher education program. Candidates spent two full days in schools during the fall; they spent four days per week in the spring. Candidates were paired with a coach and mentor throughout the experience.

The predominantly White female group of candidates engaged in reading Latino literature, writing responses (using required prompts), and discussing the literature during the seminar. The candidates followed up their group discussion with an additional written response. Researchers found four categories in the candidates' responses to the literature: cultural

(increased understanding/knowledge), general or universal (connections; not necessarily cultural), negative (no connection; unfavorable response), or no response or opinion (blank; no opinion). Of the 930 responses to literature, the majority were “universalist” in nature. Initially, researchers thought this meant Latino literature had no significant impact on CRP; however, further exploration of universalist responses showed otherwise. Findings indicated the candidates connected at a human level, through personal connections to the literature; candidates were concerned for the welfare of their students and valued diversity; candidates believed they should promote tolerance and acceptance through the curriculum. Researchers drew the following conclusions from their work: 1) preservice teachers are compassionate; 2) preservice teachers must be encouraged to be risk-takers and confront culturally sensitive and controversial issues. In subsequent years, Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia conducted a follow-up study in which they found the preservice teachers continued to use multicultural literature in their classrooms, upon program completion; they were also instrumental in bringing additional, high-quality, multicultural literature into their schools.

Teachers must be prepared to engage in CRP to effectively serve students in their classrooms. Finding the best model for preparing preservice teachers is a challenge in itself. Researchers have examined the effectiveness of various models for preparing future teachers to work in culturally diverse schools (Lim & Able-Boone, 2005; Pappamihel, 2004). Two models are widely used to prepare candidates for culturally relevant teaching: 1) Multicultural education courses taught in isolation; 2) Multicultural education embedded in teacher preparation programs at all levels, in all coursework (Pappamihel, 2004).

A third way of teaching preservice teachers about the importance of CRP is through immersive learning experiences (Moule, 2012; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Future

teachers spend significant amounts of time engaging in meaningful experiences in the school and local community. They gain significant knowledge about their students' culture through direct connections with the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moule, 2012; Murrell, 2001; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Moule (2012) stated the following about immersion experiences:

Such experiences challenge the contradictory realities between theory and practice.

Personal meanings are contingent upon context and the perspective of others. They are always shifting....Clearly, efforts must be made to provide ways to think through and debrief diverse field placements (p. 208).

Brown (2004) conducted a qualitative study of preservice teachers enrolled in a diversity course. Empirical data was collected using a quantitative measure. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of instructional methodology on cultural diversity awareness of preservice teachers in four sections of a diversity course. The principal investigator was one of the course instructors. Student participation in the study was voluntary. Brown focused on the methodology used in teaching the same course to four groups of students.

Brown looked at the pre- and post-awareness of cultural diversity in preservice teachers and the incremental changes they experienced throughout the course. It was proposed that teaching the course in a different way would lead to greater growth in understanding cultural diversity in preservice teachers. The researcher did have a good reason to look at this particular course in cultural diversity and how it is taught. Many schools are looking at their "stand alone" multicultural courses and why they do or do not prepare teachers for working with diverse populations.

The study focused on the effect of instructional methodology on changes in cultural diversity awareness. Brown uncovered incremental changes in the participants' awareness. She

and her colleagues took four sections of a cultural diversity course and grouped them into two groups. The researcher taught two sections, using alternative methodology, revised goals and objectives for the course. Her colleagues taught the other sections, using the traditional goals, objectives, and methodology used in previous semesters. Instructors met before the semester began to discuss materials, data collection, and timeline. Brown used 100 preservice teachers (all Caucasian) for this study. There were nine minorities enrolled in the course, but their data was not included in the study. The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) was administered as a pretest and posttest to examine the effect of instructional methodology changes; the reliability of this instrument was confirmed in previous studies.

The CDAI provided empirical data that was needed to determine the effects of instructional methodology. The student reflective journals, reaction papers, field experiences, and research projects provided qualitative data that showed the incremental changes in growth. Brown mentioned several activities and simulations used in class sessions, and videos to facilitate discussion among the preservice teachers. The authors' data supported the alternative approach to teaching the cultural diversity course. The researcher discussed five areas that teacher preparation should include in multicultural experiences: diversity awareness, classroom environment, family/school interaction, cross-cultural communication, and alternative assessment. These five areas of understanding contribute to the preservice teacher's transformative experience in working with CLD learners. Interviews and CDAI results supported these findings.

The concept of efficacy of criticality, or an effect on preservice teachers' thinking in cultural settings, is pivotal to transforming teacher education. Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) explored this concept using a small purposive sample of educators taking a culturally based

course. The purpose of the study was to discover what made the course transformative and the importance of transformative experiences in teacher. Data were gathered through experiential dialogue; review of course documents and evaluations, and semi-structured interviews. The researchers used ethnographic case study to examine two driving questions: “(a) What about the nature of the course made it an opportunity for transformative experience? and (b) What is the importance of criticality and culture in transformative educational experiences?” (p. 245).

Review of course documents, informal discussions, and post-course interviews with students and the professor provided for triangulation of the data; this strengthened the identification of themes found within the data. Individual researchers reflected on the data to reconstruct the content, format, and process of the course. Next, they engaged in meaningful discussions, to consider possible answers to their study questions. The seven participants and course instructor participated in ethnographic interviews, providing additional insight to the transformative experience. The researchers used thematic coding and analysis of the data collected. Three major themes emerged from the data: “unique course structure and experience; ‘awakenings’ and first steps; and praxis” (p. 247). These themes were strong and consistent throughout the data, thus validating their importance.

According to Greenman and Dieckmann, the focus of the course was exploring culture from a worldview, situated within struggle and oppression of difference (i.e., class, language, gender, abilities, ethnicity, and sexual orientation). Preservice teachers taking the course were encouraged to question, dialogue, experience, and collaborate, to construct meaning about culture. The instructor created a safe place for students to discuss their experiences, while taking risks to grow and explore culture. She took on the role of co-learner, learning alongside her students; this was a critical component of the course.

Findings of this study indicated that preservice teachers experienced awakenings—making the strange familiar—through personal narratives, and examination of concepts of power, diversity, and equity in their world and the greater world. Although discomfort was a large part of the discovery process, participants increased their awareness of miseducation often found in schooling. The use of a critical lens by teacher candidates proved to be an important part of application of new knowledge to their personal and professional.

Shor and Freire (1987) stated, “in the last analysis, liberatory education must be understood as a moment or process or practice where we challenge the people to mobilize or organize themselves to get power” (p. 34). Greenman and Dieckmann found preservice teachers in the Theory and Dynamics course wanted immediate change, which translated to a sense of agency and comprehension of connecting theory and practice. Many participants wanted to fix things that were “broken.” They quickly realized the presence of structural barriers that exist in schools and institutions, explicitly related to CLD learners. After close examination from a social justice perspective, candidates were able to develop and implement culturally relevant curricula. The knowledge gained throughout this experience was not lost; post-course feedback showed the current inservice teachers using what they learned, such as critical dialogue and questioning. Participants noted the necessity of preservice teachers serving as facilitators of dialogue for teacher preparation, and providing safe places where they could dialog openly, embrace discomfort, and arrive at new learning.

Low student achievement in urban settings has teacher preparation programs grappling with how to reach and teach diverse learners. Gay (2002) and Sleeter (2001) found that connecting culture to the curriculum led to increased achievement. With preservice teachers’ lack of knowledge and understanding of diverse learners, there is a greater need for culturally

relevant pedagogy. Duarte and Reed (2004) designed a study to address the need for more culturally relevant teachers. Twenty early childhood education majors, participating in a 3-hour clinical experience, were part of the semester long experience. All participants completed questionnaires, before the spring semester began. Those completing their clinical in an urban setting received additional training and support; those in the rural setting received no additional training. The experimental group completed their experience in a predominantly African American school (98%); they participated in two workshops, viewed two social consciousness videos, and read two books on diversity. Many of the teaching staff at the urban school was experienced and familiar with cultural norms.

High-quality, meaningful experiences with diverse learners can be transformative. According to Duarte and Reed, preservice teachers had an increased desire to teach in urban settings, as a result of their experience. Participants credited the workshops and range of activities as significant contributors to their growth as future educators of diverse learners. The authors wanted to gather information that would strengthen preparation of culturally relevant educators and ensure their readiness for working in urban and diverse settings. They also wanted preservice teachers to look within and examine their beliefs and attitudes about teaching diverse learners. The preservice teachers found they were better informed about culturally relevant pedagogy, how to work with the community, and the importance of a child centered approach, along with changed perceptions about themselves. Heightened sensitivity to culturally diverse learners positively influenced preservice teachers' desire to commit to working in urban settings and experience success.

Initial responses on the questionnaire administered by Duarte and Reed showed stereotypical attitudes in preservice teachers, toward their diverse students. This was consistent

with previous research on White preservice teachers (Sleeter, 2001). Findings indicated that the experimental group was able to articulate strategies of CRP as a result of their experience, such as recognizing Maslow's hierarchy as a means of increasing student performance. Their research uncovered other strategies preservice teachers viewed as effective with diverse learners.

Strategies included "utilizing real-life scenarios...presenting materials to accommodate different learning styles; utilizing multicultural and diverse literature...knowing more about the children and designing instruction to facilitate learning that includes their cultural background; modifying and adjusting instruction...and providing one-on-one instruction..." (p. 24). Findings also emphasized the importance of working with families as a means of supporting students in urban settings. Preservice teachers working in the urban school stated that it was important to include self-esteem building activities, allow time for talking, and incorporating play in problem solving; they also expressed strong feelings about working with families and identifying community resources.

Many important topics in education are difficult for preservice teachers to discuss outside their frame of reference (Bennett, 2008). Multicultural courses address diversity, but often leave poverty out of the discussion. Bennett explored the topic of poverty and preservice teachers changing attitudes toward such through their close examination and reflection on what they learned. Participants included 60 secondary education majors who had taken the multicultural course; the author analyzed a sample of work submitted over the course of six semesters. A required assignment was taking a driving tour to explore neighborhoods and submitting a paper that addressed the following: examining their personal background; looking at the school's contextual factors; the effect of the driving tour on their teaching; and implications of the tour on their classrooms. Anecdotal notes and class discussions led the researcher to note a change of

tone in the preservice teachers' understandings of poverty; further exploration of the previous course assignments provided insight to the transformation. The researcher noted three overarching themes expressed by the preservice teachers: awareness of socioeconomic difference, attitudes of empathy and caring, and commitment to CRP.

The preservice teachers were enlightened by their tours and reflective writing. The level of awareness that poverty exists and what it entails, increased through the tours. Many preservice teachers were unaware of the conditions students lived in and how the lack of resources could impact school performance. Bennett found preservice teachers developed feelings of empathy and caring, when they had to take a closer look at the bigger picture. This included seeing and hearing the sounds of neighborhoods, looking at contextual factors, and considering their own upbringing. During written and group reflection, many preservice teachers concluded that they should not make assumptions, particularly after seeing the sense of community in neighborhoods—something they noted as missing in many affluent communities. A direct result of the driving tour was the preservice teachers understanding the importance of CRP and connecting content to the students' lives. The preservice teachers' awareness of effective practices in the classroom, as well as before and after school support, increased through the tour assignment and class discussions.

Bennett met with small focus groups to summarize their experiences. The overall learning confirmed their developing awareness of differences in socioeconomics, sense of empathy, and increasing proficiency in CRP. Preservice teachers also understood the need for differentiation of instruction to address the range of learners who could be in their classrooms. Bennett concluded that the driving tour assignment was one means of preservice teachers viewing poverty as another aspect of diversity; one that warrants the application of CRP.

Preservice teachers' field experiences in diverse settings are important to developing CRP, but the manner in which these experiences are structured is of equal importance. Future teachers need opportunities for meaningful interaction (e.g., observing, teaching, dialogue and participation in the community) to deepen their understanding of the students they teach (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Barnes (2006) conducted a study of preservice teachers at a private Midwestern Christian university who were taking their reading methods course. The study came about because of the continued challenge of colleges to prepare preservice teachers for teaching diverse student populations. Data were collected from each preservice teacher in the following areas: autobiographical and cultural artifacts; results of cultural diversity awareness inventory; book discussion groups; inquiry projects; and field experience. The researcher felt this data would provide insight to the future enhancement of CRP and preservice teacher preparation (Barnes, 2006).

The 24 participants were juniors and seniors and had taken multicultural and children's literature courses. There were 21 females and three males; five identified themselves as racial minorities; seven as international students; nine were fluent in languages other than English. The setting was a public school district in southwest Michigan; the district of nearly 5000 students was primarily Black. Candidates completed their field experience in a P-5, Reading First, Title I school, with an enrollment of 302 students. The preservice teachers worked in small groups with 48 Black elementary students who were in grades 1-5. The candidates utilized three dimensions of CRP: academic achievement; cultural competence; sociopolitical consciousness.

The field experience focused on reading and increasing achievement in low-performing students. Barnes stated that the field experience was structured into three distinct phases, each with a specific purpose of increasing CRP in preservice teachers. The pre-field experience lasted

four weeks and involved preparation and planning for teaching. At this time the preservice teachers took a self-assessment of their cultural awareness, wrote an autobiographical poem, and presented a cultural artifact. The during-field experience phase was a 15-week period of working with students in the school. Preservice teachers also read and led book discussions, maintained regular contact with their inservice teacher and parents, and focused on assessment and differentiated instruction. Post-field experience, the final phase, allowed the preservice teachers to highlight the strategies for supporting CRP, lead discussions, and connect theory and practice (Barnes 2006).

Barnes concluded that using the framework for CRP was at times frustrating for the preservice teachers. Many had little to no experience in a CLD environment; some wanted to gain pedagogical knowledge, without dealing with diversity. According to Barnes, the preservice teachers struggled with the instructor's problem-solving techniques as a means of analyzing and growing from their experiences. Being sensitive and committed are essential to CRP.

Immersive learning experiences

Researchers (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Murrell 2001) suggest that an immersive experience for future teachers is a means of preparing teachers for urban teaching success. When practicum experiences are situated in the context of authentic settings, the learner is able to rethink what it means to learn and understand. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), situated learning operates on the premise that "meaning, understanding, and learning are all defined relative to actional contexts, not to self-contained structures," (p. 15). Learning is actional, not static or achieved in isolation. Teacher training that involves "instructional settings separated from actual performance would tend to split the learner's ability to manage the learning situation apart from his ability to perform the skill," (p. 21)

Lave and Wenger believe a broader experience, where future teachers take on different roles and responsibilities, interactions, and relationships leads to better teaching and student achievement. Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) engages learners in communities of practitioners and promotes mastery learning. This is essential because “mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community,” (p. 29). LPP guides newcomers in the process of becoming part of the community by establishing relationships with community members. All learning activities are situated within the context of the community. Abstract experiences and representations are non-existent. LPP engages individuals in social practice that makes learning the focus. Participants have access to sources that promote deeper understanding and growth. The researchers believe the significance of LPP is “shifting the analytic focus from the individual as learner to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive process to the more-encompassing view of social practice,” (p. 43)

Murrell (2001) sees deep engagement within the greater context of the school setting as critical. This is essential to becoming what he describes as a “community teacher.” He suggests a new framework for effective preparation of urban teachers. Murrell's recommendations are based on four issues which he argues is missing in efforts to improve teacher quality: 1) fragmented delivery of instruction; 2) limited professional development; 3) policy that lacks aims for quality teaching; and 4) policy that lacks recognition of divergent perspectives. In light of these issues, Murrell proposes that teacher preparation must move beyond multicultural competence. The agenda should focus on how to operate within the community and embracing a culturally relevant approach to teaching. According to Murrell, “educational literature has long acknowledged the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy, but there has not yet been a

significant impact of this concept on the preparations of teachers nationwide,” (p. 1). Based on his perceptions of the future of teacher education, Murrell developed seven principles for the community teacher framework (Table 2.1). Each principle has significance in the preparation of effective urban teachers and their success in high-need classrooms.

Table 2.1 <i>Principles of the Community Teacher Framework</i>	
Principle	Summary
<i>One</i>	The goal of preparing successful urban teachers is met through a system of accomplished practices--all activities facilitate student achievement.
<i>Two</i>	Accomplished practices can be articulated, shared, and communicated to all stakeholders as a set of standards.
<i>Three</i>	Community teachers develop knowledge and skills through immersive, rich field experiences.
<i>Four</i>	Opportunities and support (e.g., community mentors, master teachers) for preservice teachers to apply new learning leads to becoming a community teacher.
<i>Five</i>	Becoming a community teacher requires scaffolding by a network, not a single mentor.
<i>Six</i>	Circle of practitioners is the right context for preparation of community teachers. Experiences are community-dedicated, urban-focused, and practice oriented.
<i>Seven</i>	The contexts for advancing teachers must be widened to include key persons and experiences. The triad (i.e., university supervisor, collaborating teacher, and preservice teacher) should include others who can provide resources, data, and information.
Adapted from Murrell (2001), pp. 5-7	

Future teachers must be supported in their training through scaffolding for change. This change occurs when institutions of higher education, communities, and schools form partnerships that support and nurture preservice teachers. Murrell uses the terms “circle of practice” and “community of practice” to articulate the critical notion of a community teacher

and how the seven principles are embedded in teacher preparation. Circles and communities of practice allow groups of individuals to come together and collaborate for the good of the cause. The shared goal of increasing student achievement becomes the arena where all members are viewed as critical to reaching the goal and all voices are heard. Immersing future teachers in the community and connecting them with valuable resources (e.g., inservice teachers, community persons, and materials) promotes a greater understanding of the criticality of CRP and engaging experiences for CLD learners, particularly those in urban settings.

Current success of culturally relevant pedagogy

Bergeron (2008) conducted a case study which entailed enacting culturally relevant curriculum in a novice teacher's classroom. The purpose was to follow a first-year teacher into the classroom and determine the challenges faced, and examine her attempts to create a culturally relevant classroom. The participant was a White, upper middle-class, female novice teacher from a Midwestern family. She graduated from a traditional teacher preparation program, which included six intensive field experiences and a full semester of student teaching. The participant's first-year experiences with culturally diverse learners were analyzed for their relevance to future teacher preparation. Bergeron proposed that understanding the novice teacher's experiences would better inform teacher education units about effective practices. She explored "cultural disequilibrium," or the cultural mismatch and accompanying imbalance that occur when individuals grapple with experiences that they are not fully prepared to handle. She posed the following questions: "1) How is a culturally responsive curriculum enacted in a novice teacher's classroom? 2) What impact do cultural and linguistic differences have on these enactments? 3) How do current policies affect a novice teacher's attempts to implement

responsive practices? and 4) What are the conditions for success relative to today's novice teachers?" (p. 5).

Bergeron confirmed the importance of a culturally relevant classroom community in setting the tone for learning. She also revealed the importance of linguistic support for students in a culturally relevant learning environment and opportunities to interact with English speakers. Additionally, the researcher identified instructional practices that provided for the most effective hands-on activities. Successful inclusion of culturally relevant instructional practices and a tone that reflected cultural awareness, contributed to the classroom atmosphere. As a result of this study, Bergeron identified the following critical conditions:

- Support system – mentoring is crucial to the individual's success in making the transition from student to teacher.
- Administrator – encouraging, supportive principals are central to first-year teacher success.
- Professional development – training that is ongoing, conducted by experts, and takes place over several weeks, enables new teachers to close the gap between theory and practice.
- Taking risks – creating an environment where teachers feel supported by mentors and administrators, along with professional development, provide new teachers with the confidence to take risks with their instruction, and grow in the profession. (p. 21-25)

Attention to these conditions plays a critical role in successful CRP in diverse classrooms.

Bergeron showed culturally relevant teaching allowed individuals to be valued, and suggested teacher education programs look specifically at instructional and experiential

modeling of CRP, informing future teachers of policies and practices for becoming student advocates, and engaging within the school to support implementation of programs that authentically prepare culturally responsive educators. Acceptance of culturally and linguistically diverse students and the willingness to learn about students as individuals must be included. She deemed this study as reflective of potential success for novice teachers, given a supportive environment and the tools needed to become culturally relevant educators.

Young (2010) conducted a study, involving inservice teachers and administrators. This grassroots effort contributed to the preparation of preservice teachers and CRP. Looking at the theoretical underpinnings of CRP—conceptions of self and others, social relations, and conceptions of knowledge—she wanted to learn how viable this theory was in classroom practice. Using critical case study and action research, the researcher explored three questions: “(a) How do teachers and administrators understand and utilize culturally relevant pedagogy? (b) What process is involved in the co-participatory effort to conceptualize and actualize culturally relevant pedagogy in classroom practice? and (c) What challenges arise in the definition, implementation, and evaluation of culturally relevant pedagogy?” (p. 249).

Young included eight participants: six females and two males. Of these, two were administrators and were five teachers; one was a researcher. The participants included some diversity; there was one Latina, one Black Caribbean, one Asian American, and five Whites. Data was collected over a three month period and included interviews, inquiry meetings, with follow-up, classroom observations, participant reflections, district documents, online discussions, and entries from the researcher’s journal. Through inductive and deductive transcription and coding, Young looked for elements of Ladson-Billings (1995) CRP framework. Young did not echo the same themes of Ladson-Billings verbatim, but found similarities to the three areas of

academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. The difference in themes was noted by Young in the participants' responses to cultural competence. The three themes that emerged were: knowing one's students, building relationships with students, and affirming students' cultural identities. Young found that Ladson-Billing's proposal to promote the students' own culture and the one that oppresses them was not evident in the data generated by this study. Young concluded that there must be a shared understanding of CRP among inservice teachers; this was an identified area for further research. The extensive work in the area of teacher preparation and CRP has been significant, but it has uncovered areas for continued exploration, such as increased experiences in diverse settings that are immersive, transformative, and lead to social justice (Bergeron, 2008; Barnes, 2006).

Implications for teacher preparation

Inservice teachers are faced with challenges and constant change in education. The tools they have access to and their preparation contribute to their success or failure in the classroom. NCLB set the standard for all students to achieve. According to Zeichner (2006), the increase in accountability practices related to teacher preparation cannot be overlooked in the quest for increasing CLD learners' achievement. Zeichner determined that teacher preparation played, "a critical role in preparing teachers with the necessary principles and practices for improving the academic, social, and intellectual opportunities available to students of color, low-income students, and English language learners." (p. 2)

Colleges and universities find considerable challenges in preparing teachers for urban classrooms. Researchers show it is increasingly important for teacher preparation programs to look more closely at pedagogy (Lim & Able-Boone, 2005; Pappamihel, 2004; Zeichner, 2006). Crosby (1999) concluded "teacher training institutions have not placed sufficient emphasis on

preparing new teachers to work in schools that serve minority students” (p. 302). Barnes (2006) discovered the existing disconnect between theory and practice among preservice teachers. This stemmed from limited cultural knowledge bases and Eurocentric curricula and pedagogy. Teachers must know more about the world around them. CRP enables teachers to deal with challenges because it supports and facilitates academic achievement of all students. According to Lim and Able-Boone, the need for restructuring teacher preparation programs is urgent; “culture-specific courses may be insufficient as they may not be able to demonstrate the infinite spectrum of differences, and may cause stereotyping problems” (p. 226). Zeichner noted that many teacher education programs of the 1960s were based on the demonstration of content knowledge through competencies. This lessened the emphasis on methods and foundational courses, and increased the focus on building knowledge of content. Critics blamed low student achievement on the lack of teacher understanding and proficiency in content. According to Zeichner, it was during this same era, multicultural education gained national visibility.

This strategy of multicultural education course and placement in diverse settings continued (McDonald, et al., 2011). In the late 1970s, teacher preparation programs seeking national accreditation were required to meet standards related to multicultural education (Gollnick, 1991). Teachers were expected to act as agents of change for greater social justice (Shor & Freire, 1987). Zeichner found social justice agendas, along with professionalization, and deregulation have generated much debate over how to strengthen teacher education programs throughout the United States. Proponents of professionalization favor performance-based assessments, national accreditation, and, “efforts to strengthen the professional education and fieldwork components of teacher education programs” (p. 327). Teachers must develop a sociocultural consciousness and intercultural competence to be prepared for the increasingly

diverse population of students (Irvine, 2003; Machelli & Kaiser, 2005; Zeichner, 2006).

Developing a social justice stance often has been isolated from the core curriculum (Cochran-Smith-Davis & Fries, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This approach of non-contextualized experience to increase sociocultural understanding is limited and results in short term application (McDonald, et al., 2011).

Talbert-Johnson (2006) stated the following about research in teacher preparation programs:

A number of studies have offered empirical evidence that teacher education programs that have coherent visions of teaching and learning and that integrate related strategies across courses and field placements have a greater impact on the initial conceptions and practices of prospective candidates than those that remain as a collection of relatively disconnected courses. (p. 147)

Researchers (Barnes, 2006; Bennett, 2008; Talbert-Johnson, 2006) propose the integration of strategies for CRP, across the curriculum, as opposed to single courses in multicultural education for preservice teachers. Preparation programs must scaffold teaching and learning for preservice teachers. According to Barnes (2006), this should be done over several courses, not in isolation. Programs should focus on developing cohesive, systematic, culturally relevant practices across the curriculum. CRP approaches should be used in all areas of teaching. The researcher recognized the challenge of changing attitudes in universities, especially when candidates had limited interaction with diverse populations. However, the ultimate responsibility for preparing culturally relevant teachers lies with institutions. Talbert-Johnson (2006) concurred, stating, “ change will never occur if we cannot adequately prepare future teachers . . . to address diversity issues at all levels of the educational landscape” (p. 149).

Structuring classroom experiences for CLD learners that address CRP requires sound pedagogy and instructional practices. Gay identified three dimensions of a culturally relevant teaching framework that can aid teacher effectiveness. The framework consists of the following:

(a) academic achievement – make learning rigorous, exciting, challenging, and equitable with high standards; (b) cultural competence – know and facilitate in the learning process the various range of students’ cultural and linguistic groups; and (c) sociopolitical consciousness – recognize and assist students in the understanding that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum. (p. 20)

Through these three dimensions, teachers can meet the needs of diverse student populations. Teachers learn to be sensitive to student needs by viewing learners as whole persons. Barnes suggested building teacher preparation programs that incorporate all three dimensions as part of pedagogical knowledge, before, during and after field experiences.

Irvine (2003) noted the importance of colleges and teachers taking leadership roles in turning the tables on diverse student failure. She stated the following:

they [colleges] should...become more attentive to issues of diversity than they have been in previous years. Teacher education must . . . develop effective programs that are pedagogically and culturally responsive to the needs, abilities, and experiences of the growing numbers of ethnically diverse, bilingual, and impoverished students in our nation’s classrooms. (p. 71)

As Irvine suggests, teachers must align their pedagogy with student experiences. Content alone does not equate good teaching. Decades ago, educator John Dewey (1933) asserted that knowledge of content and pedagogy was not enough if teachers lacked the attitude and desire to work at becoming effective. Therefore, universities must guide preservice teachers toward

obtaining the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for teaching in urban classrooms (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). This includes preservice teachers examining their own cultural selves. Acknowledging that they themselves have culture allows preservice teachers to recognize diversity around them; this helps them understand that culture is not always visible (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007).

Lynch and Hanson (2004) stated that an individual's cultural, values, and biases may contribute to how they interact and behave with others. Therefore, teacher preparation must involve examination of one's own culture to recognize and understand that of others. Exploration of an individual's culture enables them to see the potential effect on CLD families.

Experience is an excellent teacher. As institutions work toward preparing teachers, the focus must be on meaningful experiences with CLD learners. A body of research emphasized the belief that field experiences must be designed to engage preservice teachers in "real" teaching and learning experiences (Barnes, 2006). Bennett (2008) states that classroom experience "exposes students to facts and figures, [however], their experiences often leave them unable to empathize with students...." (p. 253). This is where meaningful experiences become essential to teacher preparation. Meaningful field experiences help candidates learn "to focus on their own attitudes and beliefs about diversity to better understand that their views of the world are not the only views" (Barnes, 2006, p. 92). These eye-opening experiences empower preservice teachers to become more effective teachers.

Barnes structured a field experience that utilized the three dimensions of CRP in the teaching of reading and gave candidates meaningful teaching opportunities. The experience was divided into three phases: Pre field: Academic preparation; During field: Cultural competence; and Post field: Sociopolitical consciousness. Preservice teachers made fifteen school visits, each

designed to help them develop cultural competency. The experience included working with two elementary school students, participating in peer-led book discussions (authored by urban educators), and assessment of student performance. Prior to entering the field, participants engaged in four weeks of intensive preparation, which included self-assessment and discussion (p. 88). The experience enabled the preservice teachers to engage in CRP practices and “understand their role in the global education system by learning to create successful opportunities for all learners” (p. 93)

Teacher preparation programs cannot overlook experiences with CLD learners. One way to indoctrinate preservice teachers into other cultures is through immersion experiences. Zygmunt-Fillwalk and Clark (2007) argued for the importance of immersion experiences for preservice teachers, especially those in which the teacher candidate becomes the minority. They concluded the following:

"When students encounter this [experience] in a culture that is very different from their own, they begin to examine their own beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as their broader values about how children should be treated, the purpose of education, and what they value in others." (p. 290)

An important aspect of these immersion experiences is the candidate's ability to recognize similarities, as well as differences in others. It is necessary to uncover attitudes and beliefs about diverse groups. This is effectively done by participating in immersion experiences, where preservice teachers have opportunities to interact with others, thus gaining insight to similarities and differences in cultures. Zygmunt-Fillwalk and Clark (2007) concluded that immersive experiences provide preservice teachers with a “unique opportunity to examine their

own values and beliefs regarding class, race, culture, and teaching and learning” (p. 290-291). Understanding one’s own beliefs is the first step in understanding others.

Zeichner (2006) suggests that teacher education programs change the center of gravity and strengthen the roles schools and communities in teacher preparation. It is critical to consider the quality of clinical experiences as well as the quantity. Teacher preparation programs must realize that increased time in schools does not guarantee better preparation for teaching in diverse settings. Field experiences must be designed to engage preservice teachers in “real” teaching and learning experiences. Bennett (2008) found that classroom experience “exposes students to facts and figures, [however], their experiences often leave them unable to empathize with students who live in poverty” (p. 253). Opportunities to plan, teach, and assess should be part of effective programs. According to Sleeter (2001), preservice teachers who broadened their horizons through coursework and who embedded themselves in an extensive community-based, immersion experience, coupled with coursework, seemed to have a better understanding of multicultural education in the classroom. The overall engagement of preservice teachers in settings that include teaching, assessment, and community interaction are most beneficial. Practicum experiences must be carefully planned, like all university courses, and be closely integrated with the rest of the teacher education program (Darling-Hammond, 2000). According to Zeichner (2006), there must be strong professional development school partnerships to support preservice teachers’ experiences in educational settings. NCATE has aided the movement toward quality professional development partnerships in P-12 settings. The focus of clinical practice must not be on sink-or-swim experiences, but professional development or partner schools. Zeichner states that clinical environments must be:

where university faculty and staff provide instruction about teaching that is situated in relation to specific teaching contexts and where expertise of P-12 teachers informs this instruction and the general planning and evaluation in the teacher education program as a whole. (p. 334)

A critical component of the professional development partnership is the community as a whole. Murrell (1998) asserted that communities must be full partners with schools of education. This is the only way for teachers to develop the cultural competencies necessary for successful teaching (Murrell, 1998; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996).

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) raised the question of whether teacher preparation should take place at colleges and universities (Zeichner, 2006). The response required examination of the difficulty and complexity of teaching in urban schools. Colleges and universities must make significant changes to how teachers are prepared. For example, Boston schools designed their own preservice teacher program within the district, as a means of “growing their own.” This school district-based preparation program has also been implemented in Los Angeles, New York, and Houston. Zeichner asserted that future teachers were best served through multiple pathways; preparation must not be limited to college- and university-based programs. To change the center of gravity for teacher preparation, perspective teachers should spend more time in clinical practice with experienced teachers.

Community-based clinical experiences have been successfully incorporated into programs; there is growing empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of this model (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Novice teachers have developed the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions through immersion into the school’s community. High-quality experiences must be supported and monitored by faculty. They also need to extend out to the communities so

preservice teachers gain the sociocultural competence that is lacking in many diverse settings (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005).

There exist a small number of colleges and universities who have implemented structural, curricular, and pedagogical changes to their existing programs. Among those are Florida International University, Indiana University, Ohio State University, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Washington (McDonald, et al., 2011). These teacher preparation programs have incorporated community fieldwork. This practice of studying the community helps preservice teachers understand learners with more depth and clarity; they know the interests, strengths, and backgrounds of their students. Sleeter (2008) notes several benefits to community-based opportunities. Among these are positive attitudes and beliefs about diversity, family and community contributions to students' education, and increased openness to future teaching in diverse settings.

Engaging in short-term community-based experiences may lead to demonstrate new conceptual understandings. However there is also empirical evidence to indicate short-term experiences may reinforce some stereotypes and may lack a depth of understanding (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Therefore, it is important for schools of education to carefully structure experiences that are well-planned, productive, explicitly linked to preparation programs, and include opportunities for substantive, guided reflection (Sleeter, 2008). It is extremely important for colleges and universities to remember cross-cultural, community-based learning is not a simple solution, but a multileveled experience with essential components.

Successful community-based fieldwork varies in design. Sleeter (2008) states some programs are based in the communities near the college campus; others take place in other states. Often colleges and universities will include the community-based experience as a requirement

for all teacher candidates; others offer this experience as an add-on component of the program.

A common thread of all community-based fieldwork are program essentials. Sleeter (2008) identifies the following as essential: asset-based thinking; orientation to the teaching community; learning about diverse students and communities; learning outside the school walls; and an ethic of service.

McDonald, Tyson, Brayko, Bowman, Delport, and Shimoura (2011) conducted a qualitative study of community-based field experience that focused on two specific areas: “participants’ participation and tool use within the social practice of teacher education, and...how the structures and organization of the activity systems in a teacher education program facilitated (or did not facilitate) preservice teachers’ expanded experiences in community-based organizations” (p. 6). The three levels of analysis included individual participation, systems where the participation took place, and interaction between individuals and the systems in which they participated. According to McDonald et al., this framework of analysis allowed them to “identify what was in each system, how individual experiences were part of a broader network, what was negotiated within and between systems, and what was born out of the multivoiced contradictions in expansive cycles” (p. 8). The researchers found that conceptions of diversity (perceived by the Community-based organization (CBO) directors and university faculty) varied among participants; these differences informed the menu of opportunities available to preservice teachers. University faculty defined diversity in general terms, whereas, community directors supplied greater detail, noting within-group diversity, as well. McDonald et al. also found that preservice teachers believed their participation in CBOs was meaningful and added value. Preservice teachers had multiple opportunities to utilize their knowledge and skills, developed outside the classroom, to enhance the education of diverse learners. The field experience allowed

teacher candidates to connect with the community in ways not offered in traditional courses.

These experiences led to application of knowledge to teaching and better meeting the needs of students.

Preparation of culturally relevant teachers must occur through field experiences that are meaningful and immersive. Knowledge informs practice and experience leads to discovery. Becoming multicultural and culturally relevant, does not occur overnight. Gay (2002) described it is a process that begins with an initial event or encounter. Encounters force preservice teachers to examine and rethink their personal beliefs. Individuals “must challenge ... [themselves] to creatively structure encounter experiences, to provide varied opportunities for reflection and interpretation” (Gay, 2002). Therefore, it is critical for teacher preparation programs to include field experiences in diverse settings. Through experiences in the field, preservice teachers confront their biases, and preconceived notions about poverty, race, and culture (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Barnes found meaningful field experiences help candidates learn “to focus on their own attitudes and beliefs about diversity to better understand that their views of the world are not the only views” (p. 92). These eye opening experiences empower preservice teachers to effective teaching.

Along with field experiences in diverse settings, preservice teachers must engage in reflection and discussion after their encounters. Preservice teachers must be supported in their work with CLDs before, during, and after their experiences (Barnes, 2006; Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007) Many preservice teachers encounter disequilibrium when engaging in field experiences. Their current understandings are challenged by the experience, which leads to the construction of new learning. This is when talking about the experience becomes critical. Reflection and conversation during disequilibrium and reconstruction are critical to the learning

process (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007). Barnes (2006) found reflection and discussion, post experience, provided teachers with opportunities to develop and evaluate culturally relevant teaching strategies. Experiences are often accompanied by feelings of frustration. Discussion can help preservice teachers process feelings while exploring their role in the educational system, and how they can impact student learning. Reflection enables teachers to build a new schema. Additionally, discussion moves teachers toward what Banks (2001) refers to as “identity clarification,” or clarity in personal attitudes so that other cultures can be understood and appreciated. Providing teachers with significant opportunities for verbal exchange is critical to processing the new information gained. Ford and Dillard (1996) noted that cycles of encounters and reflection aid preservice teachers in changing their perspective. Preservice teachers require systematic dismantling and reconstruction of their current understandings to build new foundational knowledge.

According to Shujaa (1994) preservice teacher experiences should lead to personal transformation, new ways of framing knowledge about self and others, and making positive things happen. Novel experiences with diverse learners create opportunities for new learning in preservice teachers.

Additionally, candidates must have contact with families. As part of one field experience, “teachers were required to send each of their students’ parents or guardians a letter or newsletter which introduced the preservice teachers and structured field experience” (Barnes, 2006, p. 89). Families received additional information about home activities they could do with their children; teachers were encouraged to communicate with parents on a regular basis in writing and by phone. This heightened their awareness to the impact of parental involvement in students’ lives.

Bennett (2008) found preservice teachers' awareness of home led to new understandings about students.

Engaging in neighborhood tours provided helpful insight to the home and family life of students. This type of experience needs to be partnered with input from community members, reflection, and discussion to further aid preservice teachers in understanding the importance of CRP. Bennett concluded, "Preservice teachers seldom recognize that their students live in similar neighborhoods and could be affected in multiple ways by factors outside their control (p. 253). Additionally, teachers became aware of the need to connect with students on a more personal level, in order to discover how they learn best. By encountering a different culture, individuals were forced to examine their beliefs about teaching and learning (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007).

Bennett (2008) produced similar findings to those of Tyler and Boelter (2008) in relation to expectations, efficacy, and engagement. She found that preservice candidates became more aware of their expectations for student learning and how this influenced their work in classrooms, by engaging in a driving tour of local neighborhoods. After observing the neighborhoods where many of their students lived, preservice teachers realized that they must exercise caution in making assumptions about learners.

The effectiveness of CRP lies within the following: teaching to strengths; engaging learners; a social justice perspective; inclusion of all students; and increasing understanding and appreciation for diversity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Barnes' (2006) looked at the use of CRP in a reading methods course; the course helped the future teachers wrestle with their personal upbringing and recognize the need to acknowledge CLDs culture in their teaching. These new insights contributed to increased student achievement. Bergeron (2008) showed how CRP

allowed individuals to be valued, and suggested teacher education programs look at specific experiences with culturally relevant practices. Bergeron found that novice teachers should be given a supportive environment and the tools needed to become culturally relevant educators, to have positive effects on students.

Further exploration of culturally relevant pedagogy

There has been a significant amount of work done in the area of culturally relevant pedagogy and preservice teachers. However, the literature has opened the door for new questions and needs for further exploration of how CLD learners benefit from CRP. These open doors are opportunities for future researchers to continue adding to the existing body of literature. The literature also identifies areas of teacher preparation that need to be strengthened and offer valuable suggestions for improvement.

Dee and Henkin (2002) stated that special education preservice teachers were proponents of cultural pluralism; however, they appeared less comfortable with diversity. This may be due to their limited awareness of cultural/ethnic diversity in their work with exceptional children. Therefore, it suggests a need for teacher preparation programs to bundle diversity opportunities for identification of commonalities along many lines. Findings suggest learning opportunities that bring different concentrations/majors together, can broaden perspectives on diversity. Attitudes toward social interaction may be associated with those favoring diversity in education. Therefore, learning opportunities to support and reinforce social interactions are a must. Collaborative learning, in which preservice teachers are interacting and working toward common goals, increases motivation and reduces anxiety (Riggio, Fantuzzo, Connelly, & Dimeff, 1991).

It is important for teacher education programs to help individuals work effectively with CLDs by exploring outside their comfort zone (Dee & Henkin, 2002). The potential for feelings

of guilt, confusion, and self-doubt may arise; but preservice teachers must learn to talk about student differences in thoughtful and comprehensive ways. Dee and Henkin stated that further studies are necessary “to determine whether preservice teachers enact culturally sensitive strategies in their field experiences and whether those strategies are associated with increments in student success” (p. 37). Additionally, cultural awareness must be identified as a desired outcome of preservice teacher programs. One means of accomplishing this goal is initial assessment of preservice teacher dispositions, then providing instructional strategies and coaching for multicultural experiences (Haberman, 1996).

One area of teacher preparation that is lacking is multicultural experiences and their ability to expose preservice teachers to multiculturalism and culturally relevant pedagogy (Bakari, 2003; Hillard, 1995). Preservice teachers must receive assistance in reflection on and interpretation of their field experiences with diverse learners; experiences that are transformative and lead to making positive things happen for learners (Shujaa, 1995). Preservice teachers’ experiences with diverse learners increase sensitivity toward cultural needs, including, embracing cultural values and working towards equity for all students. Classroom success comes after shifts in preservice teachers attitudes; shifts involve viewing culture as a tool in teaching, not ignoring it (Bakari, 2003).

Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) noted the importance of criticality and culture in education. Participants indicated that reflection on their own teaching and implementation of what they learned was helpful. In preparing future educators, knowledge, skills, and dispositions are important, but they must also question and act upon issues of justice and equality for all learners. Those who prepare to teach future teachers should engage preservice teachers in “authentic transformative teacher education and more success in educating teachers who might

advance social justice and equity” (p. 253). Widening the critical lens of future teachers, through transformative experiences, can build upon their self-efficacy of criticality in cultural context. Immersive experiences with CLDs are powerful and affect future teachers’ ability to understand differences (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2005). The experiences of preservice teachers with CLDs must be transformative for true change of attitudes and perceptions to occur (Duarte & Reed, 2004; Greenman & Dieckmann, 2004).

To build upon the findings of Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia (2003), teacher preparation programs must couple multicultural literature with explicit teaching about various cultures. There must also be an increase in the comfort level preservice teachers possess, in leading discussions on critical issues of diversity. Diversity must be addressed in more than just the multicultural course, if preservice teachers are to recognize it as more than a small, isolated issue. It is the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to address diversity and equity throughout their programs (Banks, 2001; Dana & Lynch-Brown, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Work must be done to dispel the myth of color blindness and not seeing color as an effective means of dealing with diversity. This way of thinking does not encourage learning about diverse perspectives. Enacting culturally responsive pedagogy increases sociocultural consciousness and creates agents of change in spite of the growing number of diverse learners and predominantly White teaching force (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

According to Barnes (2006) teacher preparation programs must realize the power of highly-qualified teachers. Teacher preparation programs have to work to change the attitudes and teaching practices of preservice teachers. It is also critical to scaffold the experiences, to better support growth and learning of preservice teachers about CRP and CLDs. This can be accomplished by embedding the multicultural course experience throughout teacher preparation,

focusing on transformative experiences, and encouraging opportunities for immersive learning experiences (Duarte & Reed, 2004; Greenman & Dieckmann, 2004; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2005).

Young (2010) found a disparity in the key elements of CRP identified by Ladson-Billings (1995), and how inservice teachers articulated them. She stated that further research in this area could help us understand why White educators “focus on minority students; home culture when conceptualizing culturally relevant pedagogy rather than a wider culture that embraces high expectations and collegial support from the school, the community, and society” (p. 253).

Based on Young’s work, significant work in planning lessons that include CRP strategies is important. She identified opportunities often missed by inservice teachers that would help CLDs better understand content and make global connections. The challenges and lack of knowledge and understanding of CRP in the participants, Young highly recommends additional training on implementation by teacher preparation programs. The researcher stated, “The void in scholarly research is not in the knowledge of theories but in the knowledge of how to implement them, particularly in a way that has a wide-reaching and sustainable impact on teacher education” (p. 259). This should be a challenge and focus of teacher preparation programs.

Summary

Culturally relevant teaching requires a cohesive, related curriculum. It should be comprehensive in nature, ensuring that all students feel valued for the differences they bring to the classroom. The common underpinning of CRP must be classroom practice grounded in the belief that students are educable (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The need for highly-qualified teachers in urban settings continues to grow. Reaching culturally diverse students is a must. It is important to make the classroom environment and instructional practices consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse learners by fostering CRP in future teachers. The key

to student achievement is systemic reform through multiple factors, addressed through academic, social, psychological, and emotional activities, in all subjects, and grade levels. Additionally, systemic reform should come through teacher preparation, curriculum, instruction, administration, assessment, and financing. Teaching methods that look beyond the basics, seeking new ways of meeting student needs, are critical to this agenda for action

CRP is critical to reaching and teaching students of all achievement levels, cultures, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. CLDs may enter schools in need of developing basic skills, because of varied background experiences and skill levels. CRP supports achievement. Teachers are able to support students at all levels, by enacting strategies of CRP during instruction.

CRP respects the growing number of CLDs in schools and aids preservice teachers and inservice teachers in understanding the importance of providing a cultural context for student learning, academic achievement, and increased awareness of the changing world. CRP is all about building on the strengths of students. By incorporating strategies throughout the instructional day, students can meet these important objectives and build awareness of the changing world and necessity to challenge the status quo of sociopolitical consciousness.

As we look to the future of teacher preparation, it is critical to consider the work of Ladson-Billings and many others, their findings, and new areas to explore. When teachers step into classrooms, knowing content is important; knowing students is of even greater importance. If colleges and universities are to produce highly-qualified, effective teachers, experiences with CLDs must be part of their preparation. This cannot be accomplished solely within the four walls of a college classroom; it is best experienced through being in schools, working alongside master teachers to see CRP strategies in action, and preservice teachers involving themselves in

the greater community. There should be opportunities for preservice teachers to look within their own culture and make connections to their future students in meaningful ways.

The proposed study seeks to address the issues outlined above through a qualitative case study of preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implementing culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms and interacting with the greater local community to understand CRP.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first objective was to examine how preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The second was to understand how interacting with the greater local community strengthens preservice teachers' ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). To explore the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy in the elementary classroom, and how preservice teachers learn to include CRP, the following research questions are posed: 1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher's understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy? 2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher's ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?

CRP is critical to facilitating effective practices in the increasingly diverse classrooms of the 21st century (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Not all teachers understand how to successfully implement strategies to support diverse learners. It was anticipated that seeing preservice teachers who are participating in an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners and enacting CRP, and interacting with the greater local community, will affirm preservice teachers' thinking about the importance of CRP. It was also anticipated that the work of preservice teachers in CLD classrooms, would provide insight and information that benefitted teacher preparation programs, and ultimately impacted student achievement.

Research Design

A qualitative study was the best way to access the critical information needed to explore the study questions. According to Merriam (2002) qualitative research is grounded in the belief that meaning is socially constructed. Individual perspectives and perceptions vary from one person to the next, and individual interpretations change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding multiple interpretations at various points in time, within specific contexts. During the course of this study, preservice teachers' perspectives on culturally relevant pedagogy within an immersive experience were illuminated through qualitative methods. A qualitative approach allowed the investigator to view CRP at a much deeper level. Qualitative measures provided opportunities to see connections between the teachers' theory of understanding and their theory in practice. A variety of data sources were used throughout the study (see Table 3.1). Data sources included observations, interviews, journal entries, lesson plans, focus groups, surveys/inventories, artifacts, and field notes.

Table 3.1 <i>Data Collection</i>				
	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Frequency of collection</u>	<u>Timeline for collection</u>	<u>Person responsible</u>
<u>Data source:</u> Observations	To see participants in environments critical to their immersive experience (schools, campus classroom, community events, after-school program, etc.)	2 - 5 times/week	October - December 2012	Principal Investigator Participants
Pre and Post observation interviews	To discuss lesson with participant prior to observing them teach. (See Appendix C)	2-5 times weekly	October 2012 - December 2012	Principal investigator and participants

Semi-structured Interviews	To have in-depth conversations with participants about their experiences; to provide opportunities for participants to articulate the meaning they make from experiences during the semester. (See Appendix D)	2-5 times (1-2 hours)	October 2012 - March 2013	Principal Investigator Participants
Journal entries	To learn what meaning the participants are making of their experiences, in their own words; to find out what questions they have; to learn of the successes and challenges they encounter.	weekly	October 2012 - December 2012	Participants
Lesson plans	To see how participants think and plan to develop CRP lessons.	1-3 times/week	October - December 2012	Participants
Surveys and inventories (Teacher Efficacy Scale; CRP Survey (Sawatu))	To obtain demographic data; establish baseline, mid-semester, and end perceptions of participants (self-reporting).	3-6 times	October 2012 - December 2012	Principal Investigator Participants Faculty
Artifacts (<i>Conceptual framework, digital story, child study, classroom management plan, CRP unit for after-school program</i>)	To examine various information produced and gathered by the participants throughout the course of their experience.	2-5 times/week	October 2012 – December 2012	Principal Investigator Participants
Field notes	To capture important information about data collection (e.g., environment, behaviors, interruptions, etc.) that may have some bearing on the study.	Daily	October 2012 - March 2013	Principal Investigator
Memos	To capture thoughts, reflections, questions I have during the study; to reflect on actions taken and what I am seeing in the data.	Daily	October 2012 - March 2013	Principal Investigator

The theoretical framework for this study was sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory took into account both the social and cultural aspects of acquiring knowledge. The collaborative learning opportunities presented in this immersive experience provided an effective means of increasing knowledge of the participants. Wang (2007) stated that collaborative learning, based on sociocultural theory, “provides learners with more effective learning opportunities” (p. 150). Collaborative learning takes place within a community of learners, where participants act as community members. Sociocultural learning theory rests on the premise of knowledge being constructed and built on prior knowledge. Participants in the immersive learning opportunity brought a set of knowledge and skills that are challenged as they navigate through the semester’s experiences. Their present understandings were stimulated as participants were exposed to new information within various settings. As they wrestled with the new knowledge, they bridged gaps through conversation, collaboration, and engaging with others.

According to Wang, sociocultural theory takes a learner-centered approach. Rather than focusing on the individual, “sociocultural theories take much greater account of the important roles that social relations, community, and culture play in cognition and learning” (p. 151). Sociocultural theories draw heavily upon the work of Vygotsky (1978) and others. Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed that “learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world” (p. 67).

Vygotsky (1978) stated that learning was embedded within the context of social events; and social interaction was essential to improving learning. When one immersed themselves in their surroundings, thinking and learning continued to develop through social interaction. Vygotsky (1978) also stated that learning appears twice: socially and individually. Learning

occurs between people through social interaction; secondary learning takes place within the person, cognitively. Processing and reflecting one's experiences leads the individual to new understandings. Sociocultural theory states that learning is enhanced when shaped by activities and perspectives within a group setting (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Without social and cultural interaction, meaning does not exist and learning does not occur. Thus, the collaborative learning experience participants encountered through immersive learning was essential to development.

As the participants engaged in this immersive learning experience, they observed, heard, and experienced many things in the off-campus classroom, school setting, and community. Each person entered into this experience with a set of background experiences and knowledge. As they progressed through the semester, their perceptions were met with new information. It was important throughout this study to see and hear how the participants made sense of what they encountered, how they handled the experiences, and what new learning they took away.

The approach was that of a case study (Ragin & Becker, 1992). Yin (2003) defined a case study "as an empirical inquiry that: (a) investigates a *contemporary* phenomenon within its real-life *context*; when (b) the *boundaries* between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which (c) *multiple* sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). The case study approach permitted me to focus on the individual participants and their experiences in the immersive learning opportunity. I examined their challenges and successes, their joys and frustrations, and explored questions with them as they navigated their way through this experience.

Baxter and Jack (2008) stated, "qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources" (p.

544). This ensured that questions in this study were probed through more than one lens; a variety of perspectives yielded multiple facets of the phenomenon. Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) based their approach to case study on a constructivist paradigm that claimed truth was relative and dependent on perspective and the social construction of reality. This approach was advantageous because of the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant. This approach also provided participants with an avenue for telling their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Participants described their views of reality; the researcher sought to understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

Yin (1981) stated that a case study design was beneficial under the following conditions: (a) when attempting to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) participant behavior cannot be manipulated by the researcher; (c) contextual conditions, believed to be relevant to the phenomenon are included in the study; or (d) boundaries between the phenomenon and context are unclear. The specific type of case study will be explanatory. Yin further stated this explanatory type of case study was useful if one was seeking to answer a question having to do with a causal relationship; in essence, explanations would link program implementation with program effectiveness.

Multiple case studies are included in the study. Baxter and Jack (2008) stated that "multiple or collective case study will allow the researcher to analyze within each setting and across settings" (p. 550). They further stated "the evidence created from this type of [case] study was considered robust and reliable" (p. 550). Additionally, development of a conceptual framework for the case study was recommended. The researchers state the following:

"the conceptual framework serves as an anchor for the study and is referred at the stage of data interpretation....The framework should continue to develop and be completed as

the study progresses and the relationships between the proposed constructs will emerge as data are analyzed. A final conceptual framework will include all the themes that emerged from data analysis....returning to the propositions that initially formed the conceptual framework ensures that the analysis is reasonable in scope and that it also provides structure for the final report” (p. 553).

It was anticipated that a conceptual framework for how immersive learning experiences with CLD learners affected the preservice teacher’s understanding of CRP would emerge. It was also anticipated that the ways in which purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impacted their ability to implement CRP also would emerge. The conceptual framework can be utilized in furthering the work of teacher preparation in the areas of CRP and working with CLD learners.

Participants

Participants for this qualitative inquiry were preservice teachers participating in an immersive learning experience through an accredited teacher education program. The interdisciplinary, immersive semester entitled “Schools Within the Context of Community (SCC)” is an innovative approach to preparing future early childhood and elementary teachers. The SCC approach introduced future teachers, “to the complex interplay of factors that influence children’s learning” (SCC, 2012, p. 1). The preservice teachers in the immersive learning program were undergraduate students (juniors and seniors), majoring in early childhood or elementary education. All of the potential participants were admitted to the teacher education program, which typically occurs after their sophomore year. Their coursework was embedded in the semester-long experience that was taught by five university professors; all five of which held earned doctorates in their area of expertise. Each professor specialized in an area critical to this

experience (i.e., Educational Psychology, Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Reading and Literacy, Educational Technology). All professors had a vested interest in teacher preparation and the development of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Preservice teachers were immersed in the surrounding community through meaningful interaction with community leaders, agencies, schools, and after school programs, which facilitated learning about the families and children they encountered. Direct benefits from this immersive experience included “gaining a better understanding of the impact of community and family context in the educational process. Participants also provided a benefit to the community by participating in a project that met a community need (SCC, 2012, p. 1). The SCC immersive experience provided rich opportunities for students and faculty to participate in teaching, research, and meaningful service in the community.

Semester activities were planned extensively, to assure that the classroom, practicum, and community experiences created an intricate web that deepened understandings and prepared teachers who recognized the importance of considering the whole child as part of becoming a highly effective teacher. Teacher candidates met off campus in a community facility located close to the schools where they worked. The community facility served as the college classroom and one of the sites for the local after-school tutoring program. Candidates met five days per week in the community-based classroom, schools, and other facilities within the community. The weekly schedule is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 <i>Immersive Learning Experience Weekly Schedule</i>					
	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
8:30-10:30	Practicum in Schools	Practicum in Schools	Practicum in Schools	Practicum in Schools	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)
10:45 – 12:00	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)
12:00 –	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	

1:00					
1:00 – 2:30	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	“Courageous Conversations”	Content and Pedagogy (Coursework)	
2:30 – 5:30	After School Program	After School Program	After School Program	After School Program	

Preservice teacher candidates were expected to participate fully in all practicum and course related experiences, complete all assignments, and attend community events, as their schedules permitted. Candidates were selected after applying and interviewing for participation in this program. The expectations were very high for the candidates and standards were rigorous.

As part of the immersive experience, each preservice teacher had a community mentor, who was closely connected and familiar with the history and culture. Mentors were available to meet with the preservice teachers to answer questions, share information, and attend community events (e.g., school events, church, council meetings). The mentors provided access to the local community and served as invaluable informants to the culture. Teacher candidates were able to ask questions and obtain resources that deepened their understandings and guided their decision-making throughout the experience.

The preservice teachers participating in the semester-long experience included 15 White females, one White male, one Black female, and one Multiracial female. Four elementary preservice teachers were selected for the case studies. Elementary education candidates completed their practicum experience at “Othello Elementary School,” located within the community. They also participated in the afterschool tutoring program as part of their practicum experience. The program site was the local community center. Students in the after-school program attend Othello Elementary during the school day.

Mandates from the national accrediting body require evaluation and revisions to teacher preparation programs. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) aids colleges and universities in establishing high quality standards for teacher preparation. Professional accreditation of schools, colleges, and departments of education makes a difference in the quality of teachers, school specialists, and administrators (NCATE, 2012). Therefore, it is important to improve what occurs at the preparation level to prepare effective teachers, particularly those who are culturally competent.

Preservice teachers have the potential to provide useful data surrounding their thoughts about teaching and learning, students, etc. This study chronicled the experiences of four preservice teachers (i.e., 2 White females, 1 White male; 1 CLD female). The participants had to be Elementary Education majors, entering their 2nd or 3rd year of teacher preparation at a specific university. They also had to be enrolled in an immersive learning experience during the fall semester, and participate in both school and community-based activities. The proposed sample of participants allowed the investigator to hear from male and female preservice teachers, those who were culturally diverse, and those who were not. The goal was to study a broad enough group of participants to provide credible, usable data. Fewer than three participants would not allow the in-depth look at preservice teachers' experiences and would limit the generalizability of knowledge gained through this inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Selection of participants occurred through purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). General, demographic data was collected from teacher candidates enrolled in the immersive experience. Based on this information, initial group discussions, and journal writing, potential participants were invited to be part of the actual case studies. The investigator also considered the grade level in which the candidates were doing their practicum. It was deemed important to look at

different levels of instruction within the K-5 grade range to identify themes and strengthen the study.

The Setting

Othello Elementary is a public school, which was part of the city school corporation in a mid-size Midwestern city. The current facility opened in the 1970s; it was renovated in 2006-2007. The recent remodeling included new classroom and office space and educational technology. This created a positive, welcoming learning environment. Othello is a Title 1 funded elementary school; 95% of the children are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. It also has been identified as “In Need of Improvement” under Title 1, Section 1116 from 2006-2010 (IDOE, 2012). At the time of this study, there were 314 students enrolled in grades K-5; each grade has two sections, with the exception of 4th grade, which had one. There was one 4th/5th grade split classroom and one 1st/2nd grade split. There were 19 full-time teachers, one full-time administrator, a student assistance coordinator, and school counselor. The teaching staff was comprised of 13 White teachers and 6 Black teachers. Their teaching experience ranged from one year to 41 years of teaching. All teachers had earned either a bachelor's or a master's degree in education and were licensed in their area (USDOE, 2012).

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the Indiana Department of Education school data showed that 86.3 % of Othello students qualified for free meals under the Federal assistance program; 5.1% qualify for reduced price meals. The ethnic makeup of the student population that same year was 1.3% Hispanic; 32.2% White; 14% Multiracial; and 52.5% Black (IDOE, 2012). This made the school 67.7 % culturally diverse. Fourteen percent of the student population was identified as Special Education; 1% of the students were considered English Language learners (IDOE, 2012).

Othello Elementary was fully accredited by the state and had made adequate yearly progress (AYP) during the last three school years (2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012). Students taking ISTEP+ in 2011-2012 achieved a pass rate of 61.2% in both Language Arts and Mathematics; this was above the corporation pass rate (58.6%), but below the state pass rate (72.4%). Othello students demonstrated a pattern of continued improvement during the past four years. Their pass rate in 2008-2009 was 30.2%. The consistent improvement in performance can be attributed to the instructional leader's commitment to excellence and CRP, and her consistent presence as principal for the last four years. The enrollment remained stable over the last five years, along with the attendance rate. Othello reported an attendance rate of 96.6% during the 2011-2012 school year in grades K-5. Attendance remained in the upper 90th percentile since the 2006-2007 school year (IDOE, 2012).

The school district implemented the 8 Step Process (Davenport & Anderson, 2002) for improving student achievement. As part of the implementation and compliance requirements, the school collected, analyzed, and used data, regularly. Students were assessed multiple times during the year, placed in small flexible groups for focused instruction at their level for a portion of the day. Teachers and the administrator stayed closely connected to the data, so it could be utilized in meaningful and purposeful ways.

The administrator, an African American female, had been at Othello four years. She held very high expectations for the students, staff, families, and community partners. She served as a true instructional leader, taking a hands-on approach to running the building, remaining visible, engaging teachers in conversations that kept the school on a continuous path of improvement, and supporting the implementation of CRP in every classroom. The corridors were decorated with positive messages, reminding all stakeholders of the high expectations and belief that

everyone can and would be successful. The stability of an effective school leader has contributed to the success and significant growth in student performance.

In addition to working with students in the regular school day, participants worked in the afterschool program one day each week. The program was housed in three community sites and serves students attending Othello Elementary. This particular program had been in operation for three years, and was available to students in grades Kindergarten through Second Grade. The program director was a community member, parent, and African American female. She knew the community, the students and families, and the university faculty. The second graders met at the local community center, which also served as the university classroom for the preservice teachers. This group of second grade students had participated in the after school program since they started kindergarten. The students were familiar with the program structure, expectations, and personnel because of their previous participation. At the end of the regular school day, students were transported by bus to one of the three sites. Students in the second grade meet five days per week (Monday through Friday), between the hours of 2:30 and 5:00 PM. They followed a regular schedule that included snack time, and instructional time (e.g., tutoring, homework assistance). The afterschool program included educational field trips that extended learning opportunities and broadened the students' knowledge base.

Preservice teachers tutored the second graders in reading. They devoted a significant amount of their instructional time understanding the importance of assessing, planning, and teaching reading to young children. The teacher candidates applied their knowledge of CRP to engage their students. Part of the after school experience included planning and teaching a unit of instruction that was culturally relevant and aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The structure of the after school program provided the preservice teachers with opportunities to

reinforce skills, exercise creativity in their lessons, and gain additional practice in teaching and working with diverse learners.

Data Collection

The data collected came from participant interviews, observations of teaching, group (class) discussions, focus groups (“Courageous Conversations”), participant written weekly journals, course required artifacts, and researcher’s field notes. The range of data sources provided substantial information to answer the research questions, gave participants a voice, created opportunities for dialog, and allowed for triangulation of the data. It was important to triangulate the data to establish interval validity and trustworthiness. Triangulation of data occurred through the inclusion of multiple data sources (Denzin, 1978). Multiple observations, interviews, and documents collected from different participants, on different days, and at different times, confirmed and strengthened findings, and supported conclusions and recommendations for future research (Merriam, 2009).

The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured protocol. Each one-on-one interview lasted under two hours. Observations of the participants took place during their practicum, while attending community events, and during the afterschool program. These observations lasted 30 to 90 minutes each. The participants also were observed during the weekly “courageous conversations” (group discussions). The data sources lent themselves to creating “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) of participants, and fully examining CRP in the elementary classroom. Thick description involves immersion in the setting and permits the researcher to go deep below the surface and provide readers with a clear, visual understanding of the participants, their experience, and the phenomena (Geertz, 1973). To understand what the preservice teachers were thinking, learning, and feeling, thick descriptions were needed.

A range of data sources also broadened understanding of the participants' experience in an immersive learning environment and CRP. Each data source served a purpose in the study and added to understanding the preservice teacher experience. Observations provided the visual information about the context in which the participants were immersed. They also provided an avenue for seeing and hearing how participants reacted and interacted throughout the study, in various environments. The purpose of the observations was to see the preservice teachers interacting with students and members of the community and discuss these during interviews.

Interviews opened the door for dialogue between participants and researcher. A semi-structured interview protocol (Groeben, 1990) was utilized in this study. The semi-structured interview was flexible in nature and allowed the researcher to establish a framework of general topics, which could be explored in depth. Key questions that were foundational to exploring participants' thoughts and actions were developed prior to the interview. As the interview progressed, additional questions were asked of participants, to fully understand the preservice teachers' experiences with CRP. All interviews were captured digitally with an audio recorder and with handwritten notes made by the researcher. The interviews took place in quiet locations (e.g., office or empty classroom), to ensure privacy and quality recording. The researcher transcribed all interviews and securely stored them in password-protected files.

The participants submitted weekly electronic journals, which were reviewed and used to explore, confirm, and clarify other data collected. These journals served as a place for participants to express themselves, in their own words. The journals were private (only instructors have access to them) and provided additional insights to what the participants were thinking, feeling, and learning.

During daily class sessions, the participants explored topics that built content knowledge and pedagogical understandings and engaged in conversations with professors. This information was helpful in monitoring the participants increasing level of knowledge and strategies to inform their practice. Lesson plans were required as part of the coursework. These documents were used prior to an observation, during, and after for review and discussion with the preservice teachers. They also provided documentation of the inclusion and development of CRP as part of their planning to meet the needs of all learners.

All candidates were required to collect and produce artifacts which documented their journey during the semester in which they were observed (i.e., a conceptual framework, child study, and photos). The candidate's conceptual framework provided a comprehensive look at how they navigated through this experience of becoming culturally relevant teachers and understood the importance of learning about children, their families, and the community. These were shared and referenced in interviews and within the college classroom setting.

An important aspect of the group discussions was the weekly "courageous conversation" (Singleton & Hays, 2008). According to Singleton and Hays, a "courageous conversation requires that participants be honest about their thoughts, feelings, and opinions" (p. 19). These discussions were essential to individual growth because they effectively engaged individuals in conversations about equity.

The principal investigator also kept regular field notes to capture information pertinent to the study. Notes were written before, during, and after observations, interviews, and other data collection opportunities. These notes were helpful in reflecting on conditions that might have impacted or influenced the study. Memos guided the investigator's processing and understanding of the data during the analysis.

All data was kept in secure, password protected electronic files which were locked cabinets when not in use. Data were not considered anonymous, but confidential. Each participant was assigned a number, by the investigator; to maintain confidentiality of participant identity, and pseudonym for the study. These were used in all data collection and reporting. Access to the data was limited to the principal investigator.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis procedures were used in analyzing data. This was done in conjunction with collection of the data (Merriam, 2009). The principal investigator used the constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the data. The term “constant comparative approach” refers both to the method and product of inquiry, but researchers often use the term to identify a mode of analysis (Charmaz, 2003). Constant comparative approach has a strong focus on sampling and analyzing data and making meaning of the text (Flick, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was essential to finding the answers to research questions. Charmaz (2005) stated that constant comparative approach consists of “simultaneous data collection and analysis, with each informing and focusing the other throughout the research process” (p. 508). Remaining close to the study data allowed the investigator to develop theoretical concepts and show the relationships between what was experienced by the participants, their perceptions, and the greater scheme of things.

Transcription of interviews began the critical analysis process. Once the first set of data was gathered and transcribed the principal investigator looked closely at the data and begin the process of coding. During the first reading, she looked for data bits that were deemed relevant to the study and answered the research questions. Merriam (2009) stated that it is important to begin with a broad enough expansive set of notations that allow the researcher to be open to what

the data may hold. Researchers refer to this as open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Open coding aids in constructing categories, through the combination of data bits. This eventually led to the identification of emerging themes within the data. Once data bits were identified, the investigator engaged in axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) or analytical coding. This type of coding comes from the researcher making sense of and connections between data bits by grouping similar items (Merriam, 2009).

The second and subsequent sets of data were analyzed in the same way, using open and axial coding; keeping in mind what was identified in the first set of data. Coding lists were organized for each set of data and eventually merged to create themes. Throughout the process of coding, it was important to look for new questions and insights that emerged. These insights warranted additional data collection for clarification.

Once all data was coded, the principal investigator identified themes. Merriam (2009) defined themes as “conceptual elements that ‘cover’ or span many individual examples (or bits or units of the data you previously identified) of the category” (p. 181). The challenge was to construct themes that captured recurring patterns throughout the data. At this point, the investigator looked for subthemes. The process of constructing themes and subthemes was highly inductive. It began with large sets of data, reducing them to bits, which eventually become major themes and provided answers to research questions. Constant comparison of the data, references to the literature, and collecting additional data, as needed, allowed identification of relevant themes. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher listened to the interview transcripts, over and over, to really hear the participants’ voices and pick up on subtle nuances, voice inflection, and emotions expressed.

Merriam (2009) stated that themes must meet the following criteria: they must be responsive to the purpose of the research; they must be exhaustive; they must be mutually exclusive; they must be sensitizing; and they must be conceptually congruent. It was important to reach a point of saturation within the data, a point at which no new theoretical insights were discovered, to firmly ground the findings and provide a conceptual framework and clear explanation of the phenomenon. The conceptual framework included the themes that emerged from the data and served as a point of reference and reflection. It was important to keep the framework in focus throughout the study, referring back and adding to it, frequently. This framework was critical in telling the participants' stories and presenting the findings from the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Analysis of the data included within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Each of the four participants became a separate case study to create individual portraits. Merriam stated that each case should be "treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself" (p. 204). All data was organized and analyzed case by case. Once the analysis of each case was completed, cross-case analysis began. A multicase study "seeks to build abstractions across cases" (p. 204). The principal investigator built general explanations that fit the individual cases (Yin, 2003). The goal was to identify a unified description across cases. According to Merriam this process "can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases" (p. 204).

It was important to engage in the rigorous process of analytic induction to compare each case against my explanation of the phenomenon under study. Robinson (1951) outlined the basic steps of the process as follows: 1) develop a tentative explanation of the phenomenon, 2) select

an incident of the phenomenon and see if it fits the explanation, 3) if the incident doesn't fit, reformulate and select; if it fits, select additional cases, 5) select cases that do not fit the explanation (discrepancies), 6) continue until no negative or discrepant cases are found. The focus was to look specifically at the participants' understanding and implementation of CRP and how situated learning affects such.

Summary

This qualitative study was designed to see how the participants understood CRP. The methodology provided the researcher with the means to collect rich data and examine the research questions. The researcher looked at how the participants included strategies of CRP, when they included CRP, and why they included CRP. Drawing from the various data collected, findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first objective was to examine how preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The second was to understand how interacting with the greater local community strengthens preservice teachers' ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). To explore the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy in the elementary classroom, and how preservice teachers learned to include CRP, the following research questions were posed: 1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher's understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy? 2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher's ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy? Analysis of the data and presentation of the findings are presented in this chapter.

Findings

To understand how of immersive learning experiences within the context of community strengthen CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers, the principal investigator engaged the assistance of four participants, all of whom were preservice teachers who were living and breathing the experience. Although they shared similarities, there were differences that enabled me to see the experience through their four pairs of eyes. Each participant viewed the experience from a unique cultural context. The challenges faced and lessons learned, wove a quilt of helpful insights that provided credibility and value to the importance of preservice teachers immersing themselves in the greater community.

Case Studies

When meeting the group of potential participants, it was noted that they differed in their gender and race. However, there were similarities in terms of their age, career choice, and school choice. The participants attended the same university, aspired to be elementary teachers, and participated in the semester-long immersive learning experience. It was soon realized that many of the similarities and differences were superficial. Once the investigator began to explore below the surface, through observations, conversations, and delving into their semester's work, new insights and understandings emerged that set them apart and unified them as participants.

Maya Williams

Finding her voice and letting it be heard. Maya Williams was an African-American female from a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. She and her family lived in this city all of her life. During her early years, Maya lived with her single mother and younger brother. Her mother later married, which meant the addition of siblings and a stepfather. Maya lived with her family until graduating from high school and enrolling in the university.

I asked Maya to tell me about her early years and where she grew up. She described her neighborhood as “rough,” but close knit. The area was not free from crime, but there were many caring families who took time to know their neighbors. She knew the names of people on her street; they knew her and her family. Maya remembered a shopping center near her home, which many people frequented. Shoppers often passed through her neighborhood en route to the shopping area. She even recalled a few petty thieves using her neighborhood as a getaway route. Despite these events, Maya loved her neighborhood and neighbors.

When her mother married, Maya and her brother moved to a different neighborhood, located in the same city. This neighborhood was very different from the one Maya had grown

accustomed. The area was very nice, but there was not the same level of closeness among neighbors. Maya did not know very many of her current neighbors or much about them. She missed the old neighborhood, particularly interacting with neighbors, and knowing something more about them than the color of their house.

Maya always wanted to be a teacher. She referred to teachers from her school experiences who were influential in her desire to teach. She was influenced and impressed by the level of caring and relationships she established with former teachers when she was a student. These relationships made her feel valued as a person, not like someone just sitting at a desk.

Growing up, Maya also enjoyed spending time with her siblings. She recalled many fond memories of growing up and enjoying her family. She loved to laugh, work with others, and have fun. Maya was a friendly person who admitted to sometimes wearing her emotions on her sleeve; if she was not in a good mood, one could easily tell. She was open, honest, and did not mind engaging in conversations with others who were curious about who she was and where she was from.

In her free time, Maya was not opposed to being a spectator or engaging in sports, but not swimming. As long as the water did not go over her head, Maya would venture in. Newly engaged, Maya was also focusing some of her attention on spending quality time with her fiancé and planning their upcoming wedding. She planned to get married after graduation.

When I first met Maya, I found her to be a very intelligent young woman who was excited about her future of teaching elementary school, and the prospect of one day becoming an elementary school principal. Maya, a junior, had enough credits to be classified as a senior. She was majoring in elementary education with a minor in psychology (counseling). Maya maintained a busy schedule; she was not afraid of hard work. She worked as a camp counselor

for three summers, earned academic recognition on the Dean's list, and participated in an immersive learning experience prior to this.

Sitting down to talk with Maya was a welcomed opportunity. She was very articulate, expressive, and passionate about her future. It was clear that Maya loved life and had a desire to work with children who shared backgrounds similar to hers. Her eyes lit up when she talked about the children she worked with each day as part of her immersive learning experience. At the age of 20, Maya had much insight and wisdom about children.

Immersed in learning. From the very beginning, Maya was very excited and enthusiastic about the immersive learning experience. Through her previous immersive experience, Maya became acquainted with a non-traditional schedule associated with this type of program. She mentioned that this experience was more intense and provided greater opportunities to learn; she looked forward to the challenges that awaited her. She felt that she would have a voice that hadn't been heard in many of her college classes. Maya often felt uncomfortable on the campus because she was surrounded by so many White students and had not been able to have a voice. She was a good student, with significant information to contribute to discussions, but hadn't felt the freedom to share her thoughts. Early in the classroom setting, Maya noticed that her classmates looked to her during discussions and listened to her comments. This gave her a good feeling, one she hadn't felt before.

The setting for this immersive experience reminded Maya very much of her home and the neighborhood where she grew up. She often said that she missed "the hood" and people would look at her in a strange way, but this neighborhood reminded her so much of a place she loved and appreciated. She stated that her new community was depressing, because it was so disconnected. Maya stated that the present community felt very familiar in an almost eerie, but

good way. She was becoming aware of a real passion for working with African-American children in the future, and especially within the community.

Maya liked the structure of the semester although there was a lot of reading, but she believed that would be okay! She appreciated being away from the routine of being on campus, attending several courses taught in isolation. She felt a sense of love for the professors and the community where she would be working, very early in her experience. She wanted to spend as much time immersed in the community to gain experience.

Maya enjoyed getting to know about the community and people living there. During a class session, “Misha,” an African American female spoke about her experience living in the community. Maya felt an immediate connection with Misha. She directed the after-school program and supervised the staff. Misha impressed Maya when she spoke to her classmates of her experience and passion for making the community a better place. As a member of the community, Misha was connected to the children and families; she had a vested interest in providing opportunities for success. Maya described Misha as passionate about her job, about people, and making a difference. Maya hoped to find that kind of passion within her heart.

One of the early class experiences Maya spoke about was the poverty simulation. In her reflection of what this experience meant, she mentioned not getting much out of it because she was a nine-year-old in the simulation. She found it interesting that people were not successful in thriving during the simulation. This gave the impression that people could not come out of poverty, but she felt differently about that. She believed hard work could make a difference and a person's mindset determined how they worked through poverty and hopefully emerged in a better place.

Maya and her classmates devoted a good deal of their reading course time to multicultural literature. This focus on literature would build to a culminating event for the community. Maya found it funny to be spending so much time talking about multicultural literature and its importance in a classroom; she already knew the importance of books that reflected her and her cultural background. She loved to read and loved books about Blacks when she was growing up. She didn't like fairytales because they were not about her; they didn't represent her culture. Maya recalled how her mother took her to the library and encouraged her to delve into the literature. She was reminded of how important good choices were to her future as a parent and educator. She was already making her fiancé read books and tell stories to improve his skills.

Just a few weeks into the experience, Maya became increasingly excited about the community center where classes were held, Othello Elementary School, and the local church. During a weekend visit, Maya took her family and fiancé on a tour to let them see where she was working. She was anxious to show those closest to her, the places that reminded her of home.

Early on, Maya had to confront the concept of White privilege and how it affected one's daily life—both short-term and long-term. During one of the group's *Courageous Conversations*, they engaged in a Privilege Walk. The *Privilege Walk* (Singleton & Hayes, 2008) was an exercise that helped the group visualize and better understand the benefits of White privilege and its impact on individual success. Individuals in the group stood shoulder to shoulder in a line across a large, open area. The facilitator read a series of statements having to do with family, education, socioeconomics, marginalization, and life experiences. Participants were asked to listen to each statement and follow the directions (either taking a step forward or

backward). At the end of the exercise, participants were able to see how differences in privilege, upbringing, and opportunities brought some to the front of the group, while others fell behind.

It surprised Maya that a couple of her university professors were situated behind her when they finished the exercise. She concluded that individuals, who had achieved success in their educational and professional experience, might not have been privileged in their early years. She was struck by the level of success they achieved in spite of how society may have viewed them. This brief experience was very emotional for Maya. She was compelled to share her feelings and hear what other people thought about the activity.

As the semester progressed, Maya found it to be very busy; her weekly schedule was always full. Monday through Thursday, Maya had practicum at school with fifth-graders; afternoons were spent at the after-school program with first-graders (a paid position). Fridays she spent at the community center covering course topics with her peers, then working with second graders, as part of the immersive experience. Despite being busy and under a good deal of stress, Maya valued the opportunities she had.

Maya had the opportunity to attend a professional conference on Reading as part of her semester's work. This was a first for Maya and an opportunity she appreciated. She enjoyed the conference, but couldn't help notice the lack of minority educators attending. Maya believed this was a good sign that minority teachers were needed in the profession. A disappointment at the conference was the lack of technology they had on display for teachers to use in their classrooms. Games have a place, but Maya knew students used technology every day and that teachers had to change and better incorporate it into their classrooms. Maya had an interesting conversation with an educational technology salesman. The representative stated that older teachers were dragging their feet and he was really trying to get them to embrace the use of

technology. This conversation made Maya value the relevancy of what she was learning about technology this semester.

As a participant in the immersive learning experience, Maya was encouraged and empowered. She felt comfortable speaking in class, sharing her knowledge and life experience with her classmates. She was not viewed as the “spokesperson” for all African Americans, but as a member of the learning community who had something valuable to contribute. She had built relationships with her peers and professors that allowed her to speak freely. She engaged in meaningful dialogue with her peers.

Becoming a teacher. Prior to beginning practicum, Maya toured Othello Elementary. The school tour helped Maya really appreciate and become more excited about the semester. She liked the principal, immediately. Maya dreamed of being a principal and found the current leader very inspirational. She aspired to be that kind of professional and be held accountable. In just a short amount of time Maya felt that she could teach at Othello because of the enthusiasm of the principal and the positive atmosphere that she felt when she entered the building.

Maya anxiously started her practicum at Othello Elementary and working the after-school program in both her paid position and for the immersive experience, during the same week—what a busy week! Maya was very excited about being in the school and interacting with the students. She took advantage of the first days to observe and make some notes about what she saw and heard. In the classroom, Maya noted the positives and negatives about the environment and her collaborating teacher. She stated that her collaborating teacher irritated her. She didn’t consider her to be a “horrible” teacher, but Maya noted ways to capture and hold the students’ attention, that the teacher was not using. Maya noted things she would like to try in order to engage her students in active learning.

One of the things Maya tried was having students take notes and attempt the math problems before they asked for help. Maya believed her students *wanted* to learn and that she was going to need strategies and resources that engaged the students. She noted a lack of participation from students who seemed to zone out in class. Engaging these students would require strategies that would make the content culturally relevant to her students. Overall, she felt good about the early experience and felt a sense of being trusted by her teacher.

Several days into Maya's practicum experience, she noted that the building principal was away for a few days. Maya mentioned this absence and how that changed the tone of the building; the overall climate was different. Maya observed the importance of good leadership in the school setting. The principal's presence in the halls, cafeteria, office, and classrooms provided stability for students and staff at Othello.

Maya encountered a student who was not grasping the content she was teaching. She sat with the student, talked to her and tried to engage her. Maya told the student that she wouldn't give her answers but she would help her understand the content. Maya felt it was important to set high expectations for her students. As Maya worked with this student, she considered her as a possible subject for her case study.

The second week of practicum was "one heckuva week." Maya did not get much sleep, but managed to come out at a pretty good place. She bonded with her fifth-graders and found them to be hilarious! She watched them in PE class and really liked the teacher. One reason she liked the PE teacher was that he knew all of the students' names and their nicknames. She described him as really cool and liked by everyone. Maya talked with him about the students, the school, and working as a teacher.

Maya participated in Open House at Othello Elementary. Not many of the parents showed up, but several students came without them or were accompanied by another adult. Maya thought Open House was worth the time invested; she talked to parents and introduced herself. She bonded with one parent in particular, as they talked about children and school. It was a good experience.

Maya was on center stage when she presented her introductory lesson and shared about herself with the class. During Maya's activity, one student became upset because a classmate shared information about him. She tried to talk to the student because he cried. She wrote him a letter to encourage him and told him to read it after school. He tried to read it during the day, which she thought was kind of funny. The next day he gave Maya a letter. The student shared information that enlightened Maya. He also made a twisty tie man to show her something he liked to do in his spare time. She couldn't keep the twisty tie man, but that was okay with her. The fact that the student wanted to share his talent was meaningful. Overall, Maya's introductory lesson went really well. The students listened, asked appropriate questions, exercised self-control, and seemed to enjoy learning about Maya.

Success Time, a focused time of instruction, was a bit of a different story. Maya had to show some tough love with students by lecturing them and laying out her expectations. She made sure the students knew she was not angry with them, but just cared about them being successful. She told them their work had to be organized or she wouldn't accept it. She felt these were her kids. She expected great things from them and refused to settle for anything less. The students were sad and mellow when they left her group, but she believed they got the message. She was excited about seeing a change in their behavior.

Maya also dealt with a young lady who was giving her some trouble. She believed it had to do with an emotional situation the student was facing. The young lady had an attitude with Maya all week and became very upset when asked to step out of the line, outside of the restrooms; Maya kept the student behind so they could talk. The young lady told Maya she hated being told what to do and that there were several things going on at home. Eventually, she told Maya what was happening—something that involved her mother's medical health. She broke down and cried; Maya comforted and reassured her by talking and listening. During a visit with Misha, Maya asked about the young lady's mother; Misha knew a little bit about the situation, and shared some helpful insight. Taking the time to listen to students was becoming something Maya valued as a future teacher. Maya was a little frustrated with the collaborating teacher not taking time to talk to the students during the day—to really talk to them. She observed things the teacher didn't know about the students and that was irritating.

Maya was happy to reconnect with her students after being away for a week. She really missed her fifth graders, and wanted to get back to the first-graders she worked with after school. She decided she wanted to make something—a small gift, for the fifth graders because of what one of her peers was doing. However, she felt that she needed to get to know them a little bit better before she did something for her “babies.”

When Maya taught her first official lesson things went well! She stated that she would change classroom management if she taught the lesson again. She had fun, but would find a different way of managing the students who were not at the board. She felt it was important for all students to be engaged during the lesson, not just the ones who were working at the board.

Maya made headway with her Success group and was pleased with their progress. During her absence, Maya was assigned two new boys in her group. She was a little sad to lose the other two students but thought it might be due to them improving in math.

Because Maya had been gone from her students for several days, she needed to reconnect with individuals who were struggling. She followed up with some of her students who had been in trouble during the previous week; she wanted to know if they were having problems at school or at home. One particular student was still getting into trouble. She gave him the opportunity to explain himself, which was something he wasn't always able to do. Maya believed that he liked her because she was an advocate for him. She devoted time to working with the student on controlling his words and actions, before speaking. Maya felt he just needed someone to talk to.

The Othello Elementary Fish Fry was lots of fun! The principal and students danced and entertained, which was a breath of fresh air for Maya and the other students in the program. Several of her first graders were there and came over to talk. One of the girls asked, "Who is that? It's your fiancé, isn't it?" The student soon returned with another child and said, "This is her fiancé." Maya was pleased to know the students were learning about her and making connections; she felt connected to them.

Maya had another good week in her practicum experience! She was so nervous about a lesson she would be teaching that she couldn't eat. Her nervousness subsided as soon as she started teaching. Maya felt at ease being in front of the class and believed she was on the right career path. Maya felt good about her career choice of teaching. The post conference with her professor affirmed her in her decision to be a teacher. She fought back tears because of all of the positive feedback. This didn't always happen to Maya; she hadn't always felt appreciated, and teaching really did that for her.

Another week seemed to fly by quickly, especially with Spring Break. Upon returning to the classroom, Maya received a note from a student about his glasses being stolen, along with an invitation to attend his game. Maya wanted to attend the game, but because of work she couldn't stay the whole time. She returned a good luck note to the student and stopped by to see part of the basketball game.

Maya mentioned the importance of taking time to play and how she stopped in gym class and played dodge ball with the students. The PE teacher joined in and it ended up being a very fun experience for both the teachers and students. Maya found it easy to talk with the PE teacher about her future as a teacher. He was also African American and resided in the community. She continued to be impressed by his style of teaching and connections with students.

The following week, Maya felt very challenged by the attitudes of her fifth-graders; they were difficult to handle. Maya sent three students out during a lesson; her collaborating teacher talked to them. Whatever the collaborating teacher said must have been a real “what for,” because the students came back in with looks on their faces that told something happened. Maya also sent three students to the office because they weren't cooperating in class. Their punishment from Maya was writing stories. She mentioned not liking to give writing as a punishment, but felt that the students' misbehavior during language arts constituted an opportunity to write.

Maya had the opportunity of meeting a wonderful teacher during practicum. She described her as creative and engaging! Maya took advantage of this opportunity to see a teacher in action who was effective and held the students attention with good teaching. She took several photos of things she liked; she also noted strategies that would be helpful in the future. The guest teacher let Maya keep samples from the lessons she modeled. One comment from a student about feeling the “goodness” of this teacher really resonated with Maya—the power in this

young man's words. Maya understood the power of good teaching—culturally relevant teaching, and its impact on students. The comment was especially meaningful, because it came from a rather challenging student.

As the end of her classroom experience drew near, Maya couldn't believe it. She commented on the way time seemed to pass by quickly; she felt saddened by the thought of leaving her fifth-graders. She typed letters to each student; they also wrote letters for her which were very emotional. Her collaborating teacher invited her to come back whenever she was in the area. She also allowed Maya to teach during the week without formally planning to do so. This was empowering to Maya, and a little surprising. It showed the confidence the teacher had in her as an educator. One of the lessons was on a mathematics concept that Maya did not feel 100% comfortable teaching. She was not afraid to ask her collaborating teacher for help and the lesson went well.

During her last week at Othello, Maya recalled a conversation with her fiancé. He asked about her favorite and her most challenging students. Maya was unable to say whom she would choose—one student over another or that one student was bad. She found the good in all of her students and treated them in ways that were fair and equitable.

Beyond the school bell. Maya took advantage of opportunities to be around children and gain experience. When a position became available for the after-school program, Maya applied. The position involved working with first graders attending Othello. Maya thought this would be an area where she could be successful in teaching and building relationships with students and families while also earning some money for school. She expressed her excitement and really looked forward to working with some of the community people—children and adults—and being connected in a meaningful way. When she received word

that she had the position, it was a good day for Maya. She welcomed the opportunity to work under Misha's supervision.

Working with Misha provided an avenue for Maya to explore and embrace this yearning to be passionate about her work. Maya appreciated Misha as an employer, but really enjoyed spending quality time with her in informal settings. A meeting with Misha over a meal began as a business meeting, but they ended up talking about family, relationships, church, and their life histories; this was very important to her.

Maya found it easy to connect with the children in the after-school program. The first graders developed an attachment to her early into her work experience. Some of the first-graders referred to Maya as "mommy." She found this, "adorable and creepy at the same time."

Maya observed how adults forget that children are children. For example, during the after-school program students watched a movie. There was music at the end and they begin to dance. The site director allowed the students to really enjoy themselves and continue dancing. It was great to see children having a good time. On another occasion, the SMART Board was not working properly. Maya and other staff members had a hard time getting the movie to play. Maya accidentally clicked on a link that was not appropriate and was concerned about the parents' reaction in case they believed students were watching something inappropriate on purpose. She was soon made aware that many students had already seen that particular movie. This caused her to think about life at home for these young students. It was another reminder of adults forgetting children are children and should be cared for as such.

As part of the after-school program, Maya had many memorable experiences. One event was a field trip to the post office with her students. She was proud of the questions they were asking the manager and seeing her babies growing up.

For the second graders, Maya planned a unit on *Dreams*. This was a collaborative project with her classmates. Maya had opportunities to talk with the students about the unit and culminating event. The students were excited about the prospect of sharing what they learned with their families. Maya summed up the week of the *Dreams* dinner event with one word: surreal. Every child had an adult show up for them, which was a pleasant surprise; two students missed because of illness. Maya realized that many family ties existed in the community that she had not known before. This community was very close.

Maya was worried about having enough for the students to do but everything worked out fine. There was one incident of drama between an upset parent and some of the classmates; several were in tears trying to explain what happened. Maya believed that one classmate escalated the situation, because she had a habit of saying things she shouldn't. In the end, everything worked out well; the parent was pleased with what the child had done. Maya was able to talk to the parent because of her relationship in the work place. They talked like friends, instead of parent and teacher in the program. They had established a relationship that aided in resolving the situation. This was essential to smoothing things over. Maya was very happy with parents thanking her and her classmates for what they did in the way of this *Dreams* event.

A few weeks later, Maya took a field trip to the campus architectural building and was able to see students really exercising creativity. One student commented that this was something she might want to do and Maya connected this to the power of the *Dreams* unit and encouraging students to realize their dreams and then taking them to places where they could see what individuals do in professional settings.

Embracing the community. It did not take Maya long to get involved with the greater community. She attended a prayer group with Misha and worshipped at the local

church, in addition to her coursework and being on staff for the after-school program. Maya noted the positive messages students received in the church setting. During a Sunday morning service, Maya noticed the students from Othello Elementary taking leadership roles in the church service. She also noted how the pastor encouraged students to do their best in school as part of his sermon.

Maya felt good about her involvement in the community and opportunities to participate and immerse herself. She and her fiancé attended church every Sunday and enjoyed it. Maya was finding the church to be a real blessing and wanted to make this her home until she left the area with her fiancé. She felt welcomed by the members and liked seeing many students in a different setting. Maya frequently encouraged her classmates to come, but they were slow to engage. She really wanted them to be there.

One Sunday, several of Maya's classmates attended church. She talked about how good this was for the students and how good she felt about seeing them. The students of Othello greeted her classmates with lots of hugs. She also noticed that one of her classmates had a small child on her hip and was pleasantly surprised at how this parent felt comfortable with a White female taking the baby.

Maya always spoke very highly about her experience at church. On several occasions, she was very moved by the students participating in the worship service and proud of what they were doing. She really wanted to stay connected with church; it wasn't something that you walked into and then turned and walked away at the end of the semester.

Maya's community experiences transferred into her classroom teaching. She was impressed with the students when they took leadership in the services at church. Witnessing this affirmed her thinking that students were highly capable and challenged her to provide

opportunities for them to lead in the classroom. She also noted that the community members delivered positive messages to the students about the importance of school, instilling in them the idea they could be successful. It was important for Maya to witness this firsthand, because she could see the how the community supported education and made conscious efforts to empower the students. Had Maya not taken time to participate in community activities, she would have missed opportunities to see her students outside the context of the classroom and possibly overlook avenues to improve student achievement by making cultural connections.

During the semester, Maya and her classmates planned a Community Literacy event. This was an exciting day for Maya and her peers. The opportunity to talk about so many wonderful pieces of literature was such fun. Maya described the experience as very powerful! She loved feeling the emotions, seeing the reactions, and hearing the passion in the voices of community members. This made her feel really good inside. The canon of literature Maya and her classmates compiled was beautiful, inspirational, and something so important for the children of the community. She wished that she and her classmates could add some of the books to their personal collections. Maya made a list of books that she wanted in her future classroom.

During the community literacy event, Maya and her classmates met a very special guest. Dr. P was a nationally known author, researcher, and professor whom her professors met. His area of expertise was the importance of community-based teachers, which had many common threads with the immersive experience. Maya had the opportunity to talk with Dr. P, informally. She was surprised to learn that he was African-American. During lunch Maya shared with Dr. P, a classmate, and a community member some of her background. Several people in the group discussed the absence of a father growing up and how emotional that was, and is today. Dr. P

didn't say much, but listened intently to what Maya and the others had to say. She continues to be challenged by the absence of a father in her early years.

Maya worked at the Food Bank Tailgate event and was surprised at the number of people who volunteered to provide food for those in need. She was also surprised at the number of people coming to get food; it made her sad to tell people that they ran out of some items. The tailgate reminded Maya of a similar experience at her home church, where they packed baskets for the holidays for families in need; this was another example of how people must rely on others for meeting basic needs. As she helped load food into cars she couldn't help but notice blankets, pillows, and clothing; she wanted to know the stories of the individuals. Maya really wanted time to talk to them and get to know their circumstances.

Maya didn't shy away from seeing students outside of the classroom or after-school program; she welcomed opportunities to interact with them in informal settings. Not only did she enjoy seeing them at church, but also liked seeing them in the neighborhood. One evening, a student show up outside of Maya's house. She recognized him by the shape of his head and wanted to go out and speak. She went out to get the mail and talked to the student and his sister. Maya also gave the student a hug and met one of his family members.

Conceptualizing the experience. One of the assignments Maya and her classmates had to complete was a conceptual framework. Maya commented on the process of doing hers and how she was challenged throughout the assignment. It was like being on a roller coaster ride—highs and lows, twists and turns. Several weeks into her experience, things started to come together. Maya began to capture her experiences in a way that made sense and told the story of her journey. Her conceptual framework became something she was proud of and not a burden. She reflected on her semester's experience and chronicled her journey. Maya incorporated

pictures, clip art, and words to tell her story, throughout the semester. She found herself paralleling her own life with that of her students. They shared similar experiences in their home and family life.

Some of the things Maya included in the conceptual framework were her first experiences in her paid position with the after-school program. She also made notes about her child study and reflected on student progress in her practicum placement. Maya also reflected on her experience at the reading conference and considered her assumptions and how they were met with the realities of professional conferences. Family and community events were included in Maya's framework, because of the importance of connecting with the family and community. Taking advantage of opportunities to function as a community member, rather than a visitor, aided Maya in her quest for becoming a better teacher.

Part of the process of creating her conceptual framework was really wrestling with the format and information included. Maya ended up redoing her framework during the eighth week of the immersive learning experience. This process of redesigning seemed to parallel her teaching experience. Teaching was a process that evolved through Maya's trying new ideas, planning, and reflecting on her work. Throughout the semester, she became more confident and knowledgeable of best practice. When Maya received feedback on her framework during the ninth week, she was very pleased.

Becoming Maya. Maya entered this experience as one of twenty-four, preservice teachers, hoping to discover herself as an educator and a person. During the semester, Maya became the teacher she aspired to be. She was willing to invest the time and energy necessary for getting the most out of the immersive learning experience. She was hoping to find her

passion, like Misha. It was evident that she wanted to be more than a college student, trying to make the grade. From the beginning, Maya was excited about the experience. She stated, “

“This class means a lot to me. It has already begun to change my life. I’ve been waiting for years for something like that to happen for me, and I thank God that it finally has. I love this program, I love the mentors, I love the professors, I love the community that we are working with, and I love the people that I will spend so much time with; but even more, I love what a difference this is making for me. To me, this isn’t just another chance to get out of traditional classes or just another chance to gain some experience....it is a chance for me to stop being depressed and confused, it is a chance for me to figure out who I am...a chance for me to spark a light in someone else.”

She was anxious to immerse herself in her coursework, the school, and the community. She took full advantage of the experience and learned the value of CRP in the classroom.

When Maya taught her first lesson, she felt good about being in front of the class, but she was reminded of the importance of student engagement. While reflecting on her first lesson, Maya said,

“[The] lesson went well. The students were engaged, and had fun. I actually had a lot of fun with them. I didn’t have any issues with discipline. The only thing that I would do differently is manage what the kids do when they aren’t at the board.”

The connections to students, their interests, and their culture were not quite there. This was an important point of reflection for Maya, because it helped her improve her planning and teaching.

One of Maya’s subsequent lessons used the lyrics of a popular song to introduce students to the topic of persuasive writing. The students were given copies of the lyrics to read while listening to the song. She talked about the message in the lyrics and what the artist was trying to

do. He used his words and music to persuade listeners to consider his point of view. She gave the class an opportunity to do the same, by looking at culturally relevant literature, and coming up with creative ways to express the author's message. I observed the students truly engaging in their work. They embraced their assigned task and worked well in their groups.

Although the students were familiar with the song Maya presented, they had not taken time to listen and consider its importance, in an academic setting. Maya skillfully guided the class through this culturally relevant lesson, and met her educational objectives regarding persuasive writing. The class had a good time creating and presenting their work for each other. The benefits of being in the classroom on a daily basis and teaching multiple lessons, gave Maya a chance to grow in her understanding and implementation of CRP.

Maya observed CRP in her immersive learning experience through the actions of other teachers. She saw how teachers related to the students and understood what was important in teaching. She wrote in her journal about the PE teacher and noted his relationship with students. She stated,

"I can tell that he really loves his job. The students love him. It is amazing to see how they respond to him.... He knows every child's name and even has nicknames for them. He is like the super cool teacher that everyone wants."

Maya could see how this teacher's being part of the community and working to make connections with students was making a difference in his classroom.

Maya's voice was heard, loud and clear during the immersive learning experience. She recalled how conflict between her classmates and a parent was resolved, through her intervention. A parent was upset because her child was working alone; she felt the child was unsupervised. The situation escalated to the point of tears and hurt feelings. Maya said,

“I went into the classroom to talk to [Mom] and she talked to me a little but was still upset....I honestly believe [my classmate] made [Mom] a little more upset than what show originally was....I believe she talked to me because I made an effort to make a connection....I don't talk to them like they are parents....I talk to them like they are my friends. It's as simple as that.”

Her ability to intervene in a tense situation was beneficial in working with parents. She also modeled for her peers how to handle challenges with confidence and care.

The experience Maya had during this immersive learning opportunity was one of great affirmation as to her career choice and who she was becoming. Being part of the community opened her eyes to so much more than just teaching lessons. She worked to become a member of the community, not just a visitor for the semester. While reflecting on her community involvement, she wrote,

“I'm not sure what all else I will do in these last few weeks of this experience, but I'm so glad to be a part of it. It has changed my life and the way I see myself. Never in my life have I felt more encouraged and more empowered to make a difference than now. Never in my life have I felt so right in my choice of becoming a teacher than now. Never in my life have I felt like I wasn't wasting my time at something because I can see the difference that it is making now, than now. For all those things, I am totally thankful.”

Maya found her voice as a student, a teacher, and a member of the community. She became comfortable in her skin and realized the knowledge and skills she brought to the profession.

For Maya, this experience was a journey that affirmed her decision to be a teacher. She had opportunities to be much more than a preservice teacher, completing a practicum. She delved into the experience, embraced each day, and learned about the importance of connecting

with students, families, and the greater community. She was eager to embrace every opportunity to connect with the students, families, and community members. She began to feel much a part of the community through her efforts to engage. Maya learned the importance of embracing everything and finding something to love, whether it was a student or part of the community. She also found that it truly does take a village and she must stay connected with the families she planned to teach.

Maya's "take-away" from the immersive learning experience was the importance of culture in her own life and taking time to share, while learning about the culture of others. She found it important to teach children to embrace who they are and take pride in where they come from.

Hunter McAllister

One man's journey. Hunter McAllister is a White male who grew up in the northeast part of the Midwest. The place he called home was a suburban/rural community; it was part of a large city, surrounded by several small towns. Visiting Hunter's home, one might see anything from fast cars to horse-drawn buggies. He described his community as having little diversity, in terms of race and ethnicity. In his eyes the diversity was found within the socioeconomic levels; there were many upper-middle class families and a good number of wealthy families.

Hunter lived with his parents and siblings throughout high school. His family owned a local store in the community, where he spent every summer working. His first experience living away from home was when he started his college career. Hunter had a great love for all things *Disney* and *Harry Potter*. His enthusiasm for comic books, movies, and young adult literature would certainly inspire future students.

Becoming a teacher was something Hunter always had on his mind. Many friends and family told him he was destined to be a teacher, because of his joy in helping and ability to “teach” others. When he started college, Hunter decided to major in secondary education. He always had a passion for literature and felt that was a natural fit for him. Soon, Hunter realized that although he was passionate about literature, he was more passionate about teaching elementary school. He changed his major, knowing literature would always be part of his classroom. Hunter was a fifth year senior, who was very involved in college life. He had been a resident assistant for three years and worked with a group of other male education majors. They were a service-oriented group, which also served as support for one another as future male educators. One of their recent projects involved painting a local community center that provided activities for children and families.

The summer prior to the immersive experience, Hunter had the opportunity to teach in England. He was curious to experience the British system of education and immerse himself in another culture. He appreciated the cultural, religious, and social diversity, but wanted to delve deeper into exploring differences. This was his first immersive semester experience. He was looking forward to spending a year studying and student teaching in an urban school during his final year of college. A change in programming warranted a change in this plan. Hunter spent his professional semester in a dual placement: one in a local school; the second in Germany. As the only male in this group, he felt that he brought a valued perspective and voice to the experience.

Hunter was very engaging and outgoing. He was open to new experiences and enjoyed being around people. When Hunter was around children, he came to life. He engaged them in conversations because he cared about them beyond the classroom setting. The lack of diversity

in Hunter's hometown had not caused him to shy away from embracing it. He was very comfortable with students of color and showed a genuine interest.

Ready to dive in. Hunter was very excited about the idea of a semester away from campus and not being subjected to lecture after lecture. As one who struggled with attention-deficit disorder (ADD), the structure of this semester fit his learning style. He liked a fast-paced learning environment, and admitted to being a little antsy when having to sit for extended periods of time. One of the things Hunter recognized and appreciated early on, was the professional and positive attitude of the professors. He enjoyed watching them interact with one another and the passion they brought to the classroom setting. He found the content to be relevant and felt there was purpose in the activities. Being a logical person, Hunter thrived on order and making sense of information. Although Hunter noticed some repetition of information from other college courses, he was okay in hearing some things a second time.

Being outside the college classroom provided Hunter with opportunities to think about the semester's experience and grow. Hunter found the day at camp to be "awesome!" As he participated in various challenges with his classmates, he began to bond with them. He felt as though he was beginning to find where he fit in with others. Being the only male student in a group of twenty-three females was not an easy task. In-class experiences that stayed with Hunter were the community walk and one of the community members, Misha, talking to his peers. His eyes were opened as he saw community members and mentors interact with neighbors, and learned firsthand about the community's history. He was deeply moved by Misha's talk about dreams for her children and the children of the community. Hunter chose elementary education as a means of helping to build social and emotional skills in young learners.

Lunchtime became a time of bonding and reflection for Hunter. He and his classmates gathered around classroom tables, outside on the lawn, or at picnic tables, talking, laughing, and getting to know one another. They shared about the challenges they were experiencing and things they were learning in class. Hunter was feeling the challenge of balancing work and school. Some days he was tired because of working a late night in the residence hall, or completing assignments.

Hunter found answers to some of the questions he'd been toying with, through one of the week's readings. Hunter had a passion for working with children and families in lower socioeconomic areas. Reading about expectations was informative and applicable to what Hunter intended to do in the future. He also realized that privilege was something he had benefitted from, even though he may not have asked for it. Hunter better understood the meaning of privilege, when he participated in the *Privilege Walk* exercise with his peers. When the activity ended, Hunter found himself ahead of some classmates, while others were situated behind him. One of the things Hunter had not always done was thought about privilege and what it meant to him as a White male. During reflection time, Hunter was surprised by his position within the group of his peers.

Hunter recalled visiting a wealthy, private school, where the expectations were high and students were encouraged and supported in their academic tasks. Hunter was impressed with the learning environment, but felt all students could benefit from good instruction, not just those with money. He wondered what the students he was most interested in teaching could accomplish when given the right tools and environment. He felt students deserved effective teachers, no matter what their socioeconomic status was.

Hunter learned a lot about technology and the effective implementation of it. He wanted to learn more about available technology and bring it into his classroom. Hunter knew that he still had much to learn before the semester came to a close, particularly if he hoped to teach in an urban setting.

One of the challenges for Hunter was a desire to be in the classroom as much as possible. He became even antsy about starting practicum with real children and students. He wanted to meet his students and begin putting into place everything he had been learning.

Hunter identified himself as a movie watching Disney Channel expert. He viewed “The Ben Carson Story” with his classmates and reflected on the importance of teacher expectations, cultural relevance, and getting to know the students in his classroom. It also reminded Hunter of why he wanted to be a teacher.

The Reading Conference was a good opportunity for Hunter to gain information about the profession, learn about strategies, and understand how critical the changing standards were to the profession. He picked up some tools and tips for the future and enjoyed visiting the exhibits.

Hunter and his classmates spent time preparing for two upcoming community events. One was a community literacy event, the second a food distribution at the local food bank. Hunter reviewed several pieces of multicultural literature and was excited to prepare and share with members of the community. He was a little disappointed when some of his favorite books were not part of his final presentation; but he found others that were equally as interesting and relevant to the students’ experience. He looked forward to incorporating good multicultural literature in his teaching. He realized it would be an effective means of making lessons culturally relevant.

The local food bank tour was important for Hunter and his classmates, so they could see and hear about the work being done for community members. Hunter had volunteered time at the food bank, but was made more aware of the support provided to families who were in need. He was enlightened about how vital the food bank was to the community and many of its members.

When Hunter met with his professors for a mid-semester conference, he walked away with good feelings. He received valuable feedback and clarity as to how he should complete some of the required tasks. Hunter could not help but think about the class discussion on assessment and its purpose. Teachers should know what students have learned and reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching. Hunter was learning the importance of making assessment relevant to the students and not just approach teaching as one size fits all. He recalled the class discussion about assessment and how many assessments have lost their purpose; they had become mere exercises to obtain a grade for the grade book, not opportunities to reflect on his effectiveness as a teacher.

I know how to teach! When the day finally arrived for Hunter and his classmates to begin practicum, he was more than ready. Hunter was anxious to be at Othello after his classmates took a tour of the building and met the principal. He loved the attitudes of the students and the enthusiasm of the principal. Hunter and one of his female peers were assigned the same classroom; he stated that he didn't always "feel" where his partner stood. Although they were both participating in this immersive learning experience, he had not learned a lot about her. He knew there was work to be done in the way of building a relationship.

Hunter loved being in the classroom, despite some issues with his collaborating teacher. From the beginning, Hunter noted some things that he felt would improve the classroom setting.

He dropped a few hints to the teacher, but those were not acknowledged. Instead, the teacher stuck to her daily routine, which included using the classroom management system she established.

Othello hosted an open house for parents and family members to talk with teachers. Hunter was glad that his work schedule allowed him to be there for this event. He was a little disappointed by the small number of parents who came to his classroom. Hunter made a few observations as he interacted with the parents. One child who was very introverted attended with her mother. Hunter learned that the first grader was the middle child and being raised by her single mother. He also talked with a father who smelled of alcohol. His collaborating teacher shared that this was not uncommon in that family; she had encountered the father when he was in a similar state. Hunter noted this information and planned to keep these insights in his mind, particularly when dealing with the children.

Hunter spent a full day in the classroom and enjoyed getting to know the students. The students were happy to have him and his teaching partner all day long. There were many hugs exchanged, in appreciation of Hunter being there. He enjoyed feeling connected to his students and building relationships.

Hunter seemed to enjoy his practicum placement and the students in his classroom, but was troubled by the attitude of his collaborating teacher. Hunter had ideas that he felt were good, but didn't feel his collaborating teacher was receptive to them. This was frustrating because Hunter wanted to provide the best opportunities for the children he would be working with.

During the collaborating teacher's absence, Hunter felt free! For him this was a refreshing experience. He struggled with the feedback he was receiving from his teacher and the

lack of communication. Hunter wanted to teach more, but wasn't feeling that he had enough opportunities to do so. Substitute teachers allowed Hunter to take on more responsibilities by teaching and working with the class. He appreciated this freedom and time to take charge of the classroom.

Hunter attended the Othello Fish Fry and had great fun seeing the students outside of the classroom. He enjoyed observing the students in a relaxed atmosphere and discovering who they were, outside the academic setting. This was a time of getting to know students on a different level and reminded him of eating lunch with a group of students. The lunch was a reward for good behavior, but it turned into a time of learning more about the students.

Communication with the collaborating teacher was a roller coaster—good one week, not so good the next. Hunter shared his frustration with one of his professors, who promised to look into the situation. He appreciated the support of his professors and their listening to concerns. Keeping open lines of communication was important to Hunter; he wanted to build a relationship with his collaborating teacher.

Poverty hit Hunter right in the face during the practicum. He noticed several students coming to school hungry. He wanted to do more for the students; he felt a sense of helplessness in seeing the impact of poverty and not being able to help. He saw how the students were unable to focus and complete their work when they were hungry. One of Hunter's students came to school three days in a row without breakfast. He wanted to do something for the child—to feed him—but he knew this could not be done. The school had policies that must be followed, and Hunter could not break them. He felt for the child, because it was not his fault for being late to school and missing breakfast. There were adults who should be taking responsibility for helping him in the mornings.

Hunter struggled with writing one of his lesson plans; it was becoming a very daunting task. It seemed as though roadblocks kept popping up, preventing him from writing a good lesson. One of Hunter's challenges was including elements of CRP into the lesson. He understood the importance of doing so, but was challenged by the incorporation of quality materials and strategies that spoke to the culture of his students.

Hunter's collaborating teacher had been in a good mood during one of his practicum weeks, although he had not seen a change in classroom management. Despite the way things had been with the collaborating teacher, Hunter felt spending two full days in practicum was good. He bonded with the students and was able to take in more of the classroom experience. He also discovered some relationships between students in class and the after-school program. Some of his first grade practicum students were related to the second graders he worked with after school. Taking time to listen to students opened Hunter's eyes to much more than academics.

Hunter was disappointed that he could not attend family night at school, because of his work schedule. He really wanted to see the students, talk to parents, and be part of the experience. The value of building relationships was important to Hunter as a future teacher and as part of this semester's experience.

Hunter struggled with scheduling—during and after the school day. He tried to schedule teaching times with his collaborating teacher, but found it very difficult. The relational piece was lacking. This had been emphasized from a standpoint of student to teacher, but was really becoming a barrier in his lack of relationship with his collaborating teacher. He felt that his collaborating teacher was gaining trust in him, but the lines of communication were not always open. During one exchange, Hunter's teacher offered a piece of advice. She recommended,

“Getting a bunch of information about students and families before the school year started.”

Hunter wasn’t quite sure how to take this.

Hunter was able to apply information from class discussions about assessment to his classroom experience. Students were given a rhyming test, which had vocabulary the students didn’t know. “Thimble” and “shrub” were not words first graders used on a regular basis. Hunter was reminded of the importance of assessment being worthwhile and culturally relevant. He wanted to be sure that his assessments of student learning were applicable to what he wanted students to learn, but most importantly, meaningful and practical. He found the assessments in the reading textbooks frustrating. The use of vocabulary without context did not allow students to demonstrate what they knew about a concept. Hunter’s decided that his assessments would be designed to set students up for success, not failure.

Saying good-bye to the students at the end of practicum was sad, but went as well as could be expected. Hunter received many hugs from his students and inspiring messages. Throughout the classroom experience, Hunter learned the importance of “showing up” at school and being present in the lives of his students. There were opportunities to see how a substitute changed the dynamics of the school setting, and Hunter noticed that connections and relationships were missing with some of the substitute teachers in his practicum classroom. Hunter knew he would miss these students; they made teaching more important and personal for him as a future teacher.

They can’t believe I’m down with that. Tutoring students in the after-school program had such an impact on Hunter! His eyes were opened to the nature of planning, teaching, and assessing individual students and making the lessons relevant to their needs. Being a regular part

of the after-school program also helped Hunter identify and implement effective strategies, find his teacher voice, and witness things that were less than effective.

One of the things Hunter didn't like was the yelling. Often times, the adults in charge would yell at the students. Hunter knew there were other ways to communicate and keep students on track. He believed that staff members were losing sight of the fact that the children had been in school all day, prior to coming to the after-school program. He realized that the students were not perfect; they had given him a run for his money during center time. There had been some talking back and non-compliance. He saw this as the students testing him, because he was new. Hunter knew he had to have the students listen and follow directions, but he must be sensitive to the students and avoid yelling or expecting them to sit perfectly still.

One of the assignments Hunter was given was to create a book box for a specific student. He spent time talking with the child about his interests in life and reading. Using this information, Hunter gathered books that were developmentally appropriate for the student. He also incorporated books that were culturally relevant, and reflected the student's culture in positive ways. The child seemed pleased with materials he could read, comprehend, and that were of interest to him.

Hunter and his peers developed the unit on *Dreams* and began teaching it. The first week went well—although, not as planned. Communication became an important piece of planning and teaching the unit. Because Hunter and his peers taught the unit on different days, each group had to leave good notes, indicating what was accomplished the day before. This would allow the following group to know exactly where to start. Many times Hunter and others took a few minutes during their lunchtime to touch base with each other.

Spending time with the students in small groups, one-on-one, and conversing during snack time was a welcomed opportunity. Hunter took advantage of the snack time to talk with students, laugh, and find out more about them. It was during this time Hunter tried to bond with one particular student. He wasn't sure how successful he was until the student asked him to play football. Hunter readily agreed and used this opportunity to continue bonding with the student. The student-initiated contact was something Hunter felt good about, feeling he had reached the student and established a relationship.

Tutoring was a challenge for Hunter. He had been assigned a student who liked to test the limits with him. Early on, he didn't feel as though the student liked him or respected his authority. She would talk back, roll her eyes, and take her time in complying with Hunter's requests. As time progressed, Hunter felt he was making "baby steps" in bonding with the student. One successful moment came when she mentioned liking Hunter's taste in music, although she mentioned that he had, "No Swag!" Hunter appreciated the student's acceptance of him and the fact that he was building a relationship.

Hunter felt good about the *Dreams* dinner for families and the work he and his peers were able to do. He was a little disappointed that he was unable to attend the entire event; Hunter was on duty as RA in residence. It was hard to walk away, having invested time and energy into putting together the event, and not being able to see it through.

A White man can learn a lot from a Black woman. Hunter was concerned about meeting his mentor for the first time. He was a bit apprehensive about being paired with a person for the entire semester who he might not get along with. Hunter was pleasantly surprised to meet his mentor, a Black woman of character, elegance, intelligence, and a sense of humor. Meeting Miss M. was a delight and reinforced the idea that this semester was going to be "fun!"

Conversation flowed between Hunter and his mentor, as she shared stories of the community, people, and the places she held near and dear.

One of the things Hunter picked up right away was the importance of religion to the community. During the tour, Hunter and his classmates visited the largest church in the community, one where many of the students and mentors attended. Hunter admitted to not being a very religious person, but he respected the importance of the church to the community and its members.

Hunter had the opportunity to help with a block party, hosted by one of the community after-school sites. He was impressed by how friendly everyone was; how they accepted him into the community and activities. He saw several people connected with the school—principal teachers, students. He also saw his mentor at the event. Hunter felt good being at the block party and about helping.

One of Hunter's frustrations came from his work schedule interfering with attending community events. Hunter listened to his classmates share about their experiences in church, school, and community events. Many of the events occurred during the hours that Hunter had to be on duty in the residence hall. He wrestled with the desire to be present and immerse himself in the community and fulfilling his work commitments.

Hunter was able to work around his schedule and attend the community cleanup. He enjoyed the physical work of “doing” something to improve the community. He also liked being able to talk to community members and get to know more about them. The community members held regular meetings to talk about what was happening and take care of important business. Hunter had heard about these council meetings, and hoped to attend one.

Hunter saw the effects of poverty on students in the classroom, but was made aware of its greater impact on the community during the Tailgate event. Hunter was overwhelmed by the number of families who came to the food bank for assistance. People needing help came to receive food that would allow them to survive and make ends meet. He talked with those who came for the Tailgate and those persons who were helping with the distribution. He enjoyed this time of helping and learning more about the community and families.

Although Hunter could not be present at as many events as he wanted, he found a way to engage his peers in a project that helped the community. With the help of his male educator group, the walls of the community center were revitalized. The male students spent a Saturday applying fresh coats of paint to the walls, surprising everyone with a new look on Monday. Hunter felt good about engaging his peers in this service project; they found a need and addressed it. He knew the center was an important part of the community that benefitted many children and families. Being able to give the center a little cosmetic boost was good for the community. It was also good for his peers to see the community, where many of them had not been, and provide something that was needed and appreciated. Hunter hoped that the men's organization would develop a partnership with the community center, so that other needs could be met.

Hunter enjoyed the community literacy event and felt validated for the work he and his classmates did. His mentor attended and told stories that enlightened Hunter and his classmates about the significance and importance of books that represented the culture. Many of the mentors told the back stories of books chosen for the event. This added another layer to the significance of the books and the critical need to have these and others in the hands of children of color.

One of Hunter's favorite quotations was, "It is attitude, not aptitude that determine your success." He related this to his seeing students achieve success not only in academics, but in life. When Misha spoke to his class, he felt her emotional connection to the community and the desire to support the children who lived there. Hunter learned from the community members that it is not always about addition facts or learning to read, but about building skills for successful living (e.g., Social and emotional skills). He valued glimpsing into community events and seeing the students in action. Hunter walked away from the events he attended, realizing that he should learn from community members and how they provided students with opportunities to do more than just sit back and let the grownups lead. Students of Othello were valued by the community members and encouraged to be active participants.

Conceptualizing the experience. Hunter's conceptual framework was a project that placed him in start, stop, and begin again mode. He attempted to chronicle his journey with pre-experience feelings and attitudes about the various topics. He felt this was a good way to show his understandings and how they grew during the semester. Throughout the course of the semester, Hunter noted questions that came up along his journey. At one point, Hunter changed one of his categories from "classroom" to "community." This allowed him to write more about the community and how it affected students. His final representation was divided into three segments: cultural relevance, continuing growth, and personal relationships. During the semester, Hunter explored the area of cultural relevance in his coursework, teaching, and tutoring. He was confronted, several times, with the need to continue to grow as an educator and in his own understandings. Personal relationships were an important part of Hunter's framework, because he spent a good deal of time reaching out to students and trying to build relationships with those who didn't seem reachable.

Becoming Hunter. Hunter entered into the immersive learning experience with some background in understanding diversity. He surprised himself by actually walking away with a new perspective on what this experience represented and how much there was to learn. An early comment from Hunter, provided insight into his way of learning. He said:

“I tend to be a very logically driven person....Something that I have really appreciated is that everything... the reading...the activities... all have purpose.... I haven't had to struggle through reading at night or pushing through a lecture to survive. I find that not only important for my own sanity, but as a role model for our own expectations as teachers.”

Hunter would soon learn that CRP was not another logical problem to be solved, but a process to work through, one that required time and opportunities to think and reflect.

Hunter definitely brought his perspective and his passion to the table, but realized that his voice was that of one with privilege. The group's participation in the *Privilege Walk* gave Hunter the opportunity to look at how his gender and race gave him privilege over others. Hunter described walk as follows: *“I loved doing to privilege activity....I have never thought much about [my life]but I'm usually still in the top of the [group] as far as life experiences go.* “He had to challenge and confront his own thinking about the topics discussed in class and experiences during the semester, along with everyone else in the room. Hunter stated,

“I'm so happy that I am still able to find things to challenge my perceptions. I really haven't thought that was possible....I have had such extensive diversity training in the last three years, but it is BLOWING MY MIND how much I still have to learn....I was always pretty passionate about teaching in an urban school, but its growing more and more and more.”

Hunter's passion for working in an urban setting contributed to his enthusiasm and anxiousness to enter the classroom. He was confident in his ability to plan and teach lessons and was ready to engage in teaching and learning in the first grade classroom.

Once he entered the classroom, it was not a matter of simply planning, teaching, and assessing. Hunter learned about the importance of communication with others, often finding himself frustrated with his collaborating teacher. He wanted to communicate with her and seek guidance in his lessons, but this became a point of frustration during his experience.

Being one that valued clear expectations, Hunter felt he wasn't always getting this in the school setting. After teaching his first lesson, Hunter felt things went well, but was surprised by his teacher's feedback. He stated: *"My lesson on Tuesday was GREAT, but [the teacher]said I did not create a lesson that was about their current classroom work."* This challenged Hunter to revisit his work and continue to make efforts to communicate with his teacher. He also had to take time to reflect.

As the semester progressed, Hunter was challenged by creating lessons that were culturally relevant. He had to think about what CRP meant, how it looked, and what strategies he needed to use. When planning a lesson for using the dictionary, Hunter wrestled with making it engaging and authentic for his students. Hunter stated:

"My...lesson plan is driving me nuts! I found a really great project to do with kids, but I don't know how to make it culturally relevant....I just can't think of how to make it more engaging or how to include some culturally relevant literature with it."

Hunter had to take a step back and talk with others for assistance in planning a lesson that was culturally relevant. Once again, he was reminded of the importance of the process of cultural

relevance and taking time to develop good skills. The journey to cultural competence was not complete at this point in his experience.

Critical course dialogue and readings helped Hunter work through his feelings of frustration and be even more determined to succeed. After a discussion about one of the course readings, he was emotionally touched just thinking about the work he intended to do:

“I LOVED the article about hard/soft expectations we have of our students depending on their life experiences. Before this course, I was trying to formulate in my head (for years now) how teaching needed to be tailored to be effective in a low SES community, and why it needed to be different than in a middle or high SES community. Reading this article almost put me in tears because it was basically the answer I was looking for!”

The value of this reading was that it helped bring him closer to understanding CRP as a future educator.

One of the areas where Hunter demonstrated strength in utilizing CRP was in his work with small groups and individuals. Observing Hunter in this role showed how much he cared for students and was able to make connections and build relationships. Hunter, a natural people person, valued the opportunity to connect with others. During my observations of the after-school program, Hunter reached out to students and showed them he cared. He enjoyed the time spent talking with students while they ate their snacks. He put names with faces, remembered things about individual students, and managed to playfully interact with them. He enjoyed working with students one-on-one and felt good about what he was able to accomplish in short periods of time.

One of the standout opportunities to bring CRP to the after-school program was in creating a book box for a student. Hunter said the following about his designing the book box:

“Working on [this] made me so happy. Talking to [my student] about the books I picked out for him got him really excited that someone cared so much about what he was reading. He even gave me a list of more things he wants to read about, which was great.”

Hunter was able to bring cultural relevance to this student in the form of good literature and allow the student to have a voice in what was important to him.

Another valuable lesson for Hunter was not only the importance of building relationships, but making sure they were authentic and that sometimes they are accompanied by struggles. In Hunter’s reflection about tutoring, he mentioned the following:

“[My student] was great to work with.... She really helps me learn a lot about working with...difficult...students. She can be aggressive and opinionated, which are strengths that I don't work well with, so getting to know her has really helped me with that. After working with her, I realize how important it is to be transparent with her....I think letting her know that really helped put the two of us in a better place, and working with her was actually kind of fun!”

Hunter learned from his student how important it was to be authentic with students. The real relationships were recognized and valued by students in a CLD setting. Had it not been for this opportunity to work with this student, Hunter may have missed the chance to reflect on the value of authentic relationships, in an effort to be culturally relevant.

At the end of Hunter’s journey, he realized that however much one believes they know, there is always room to grow and that it isn’t always about the three R’s. True growth comes from within, stopping to reflect on the journey, not just racing to cross the finish line.

One of Hunter’s dreams as a future educator was to be a force in changing perceptions and practices in urban education. The immersive semester made that real for him. He was

grateful for the opportunity to participate in this experience and work toward making a difference. Hunter approached the immersive learning experience with the eyes of one who felt he understood diversity and was ready to be a teacher. He found himself in a place of learning and walking away with new insights. Despite his cultural differences with students, he found ways to connect with them and walk away with a better understanding of his future as a teacher. Hunter's ability to connect with others served him well, and will continue to do so in the future. He acknowledged his need for more growth in the way of understanding CRP and becoming more culturally competent. His experiences with persons of different cultures and training provided a foundation, but showed one can always find ways to deepen their level of understanding. Hunter learned that it was important to get to know people (i.e., adults and children) one-on-one. Hearing another person's story created a connection and lead to new knowledge.

Ending this experience reminded Hunter of several things. One has to be an advocate for his students. He also learned the value and importance of knowing about places—particularly the community one serves. He recognized the power of verbal and non-verbal cues, especially with CLD learners. Finally, Hunter mentioned that teaching extending beyond the school. Therefore, knowing the families and community are integral pieces of successful teaching.

Chloe Parker

An incredible journey. Chloe Parker is a White female majoring in elementary education. She was a junior who had a concentration in psychology and counseling when she began the immersive learning experience. One of the first things I noticed about Chloe was her smile and a slight twinkle in her eyes. She had a way of putting one at ease when seeing that smile.

Chloe was born and raised in a small Midwestern city, just north of where she attended college. The community primarily consisted of White families and featured very little diversity. Her graduating class of 112 reflected the community and its majority population. Her hometown was also home to a small Christian university.

When asked about her upbringing, Chloe shared that her parents raised her and her brother. She enjoyed spending time with her family, often trying her hand at cooking and baking something special. Chloe had an adventurous side; she was SCUBA certified and also enjoyed keeping physically fit by running. In her spare time, Chloe liked crafting, being with friends, and frequently captured the fun times on film.

Chloe did not have much experience in diverse settings or with people from other cultures. She had taken on this immersive learning experience with three of her friends, and was very excited about learning. She looked forward to learning about the community, the culture, and the people she would encounter during the semester.

Lessons learned alongside friends. From the first week, Chloe was impressed with the amazing start to the immersive learning program. She was making this journey toward cultural competence with three of her friends and felt very good about this additional support. One of the very first speakers was a member of the community and head of the after-school program; her name was Misha. Chloe was drawn in by Misha's passion for the community, school, and children when she shared her story. Misha's willingness to tell her story about living and working in the community painted a very vivid picture of just how special this place was. Many of the things Misha shared resonated with Chloe. She shared Misha's belief in encouraging students to set goals and work toward achieving them. Chloe knew that she must keep this in mind as she began her work with students and in her future as a teacher.

Chloe summed up her week's experience as feeling, "astonished." There was much discovered about culture, including the fact that Americans do have culture. She found others could view the American customs as unusual, strange, or even odd. The article on the Nacirema helped her see the importance of immersing oneself in a culture instead of observing from the fringes. She also had to think about the importance of understanding another culture and not being quick to make judgments. Understanding another person's culture is not something that happens rapidly; it takes time and effort to bond with another individual. Chloe was reminded of this during the camp experience as she began bonding with her peers and understanding the importance of teamwork. She also related this experience to the future of teaching and forming relationships with her students in the classroom.

Chloe was struck by the work of Urie Brofenbrenner and his theory of systems. This information would be helpful in understanding the whole child and meeting their needs in a classroom setting. Encouraging the setting of goals and meeting basic needs was something that she knew needed to be in place for every child in her classroom. During the poverty simulation, Chloe was greatly affected by the depth and breadth of poverty and how it can affect the children in her classroom. She had participated in the simulation once before, but this time the impact was much greater. She couldn't imagine how students in her classroom, experiencing poverty, could concentrate on academics when they were hungry; worried about having a place to sleep, and having other basic needs met. The life stories of the facilitators touched Chloe and were beneficial to deepening her understanding of poverty.

Many of the class discussions provided Chloe with new information and opportunities to reflect on teaching. During a class discussion on the *Daily 5* and multicultural children's literature, she gained greater appreciation for good literary selections and incorporating them into

the curriculum. The checklist Chloe and her peers used with the literature was helpful in looking beyond the title and illustrations, in order to find literature that depicted members of the culture accurately. When Chloe visited the local library with her peers, she immersed herself in the literature available and applied what she learned in the classroom. Chloe and her peers worked as a team to select a canon of literature that would be good for the students in their practicum classrooms and the after-school program.

Chloe appreciated the discussion on technology in the classroom and recommendations from her professor. She had always liked technology and planned to utilize it whenever possible. She was the type of person who liked to tinker with technology, in order to understand how it worked. When a peer asked about teaching children *how* to use technology, this struck Chloe as interesting. She hadn't thought about this, because of her own learning style. She recalled watching her cousins embrace technology with enthusiasm and intuitiveness, with very little instruction from adults.

During the *Courageous Conversation* about privilege, Chloe realized that she was born privileged and had a very nice upbringing. She also recognized the fact that others were not as privileged. She was heartbroken, thinking of people who had lived a life of poverty and not had the opportunities she had experienced. An especially poignant moment occurred when one of her classmates mentioned that they might not have been friends under different circumstances. Chloe had to stop and think about this and realized that her high school experience centered on friends who shared similar backgrounds. This made Chloe extremely grateful for the experience she was having with her peers this semester and being able to know others who were not exactly the same. She learned to appreciate people for who they were and not the color of their skin or where they grew up. Chloe and her peers wrestled with the issue of race and further explored

White privilege. She dealt with feelings of guilt and developed new understandings about how race is a social construct and people can be marginalized solely based on their appearance and assumptions made by others. By the end of the week, Chloe had moved closer to understanding the importance of cultural competence and how to teach CLD learners.

Chloe was able to attend the State Reading Conference and valued the experience. She listened to the keynote speaker and managed to take away a few points, despite some distractions from talkers in the audience. She believed that teachers should understand the Common Core State Standards and how these could best be implemented to benefit students. She also benefitted from the sessions on literacy and math manipulatives, music in the classroom, and reading comprehension. Chloe and her peers walked away with new knowledge and some manipulatives they could use later. The conference was also an opportunity to see just how much she was learning in the off-campus classroom about reading. Much of the information reinforced what she was learning with her peers.

The simple act of writing with one's non-dominant hand can lead to new understandings about students. Chloe felt frustrated when asked to write with her non-dominant hand during a class exercise. She compared this to the feelings of students not being able to do things they enjoy and that are culturally relevant. She thought about how she felt when she was running, singing, or dancing and how free she felt. Chloe wanted to remember this experience and make sure all students in her classroom experienced freedom and joy during the learning process. For Chloe, the biggest challenge of teaching young learners would be engaging them—their hearts, minds, and souls. She believed teaching was not a passive occupation, but a passionate one. Successful teaching would require her to be passionate about her work, put forth the effort and demonstrate the necessary drive to ensure student success.

Chloe and her peers discussed classroom management on several occasions. She admitted this was an area of concern. She welcomed the opportunity to discuss and explore different strategies with her peers and professors during class. By the semester's end, Chloe hoped to have a solid plan in place, one that she could reference in the future. She understood that every strategy would not fit her personality or students' needs, but having a point of reference would be helpful. Chloe was reminded of Vygotsky's work and students needing to discover in order to learn. Chloe didn't want her students to sit in groups and remain silent, without opportunities to interact with each other. Cooperative groupings in a classroom setting facilitated collaboration and could open doors to students helping each other in the process.

Chloe found it important to understand the need for culturally relevant classroom management in her teaching. Growing up, her elementary school was not very diverse and wouldn't have required teachers to consider this. If she returned to the school, the number of CLD learners would have increased and there would be a need for CRP and management strategies.

Chloe was required to read an article on classroom management that mirrored much of what she was observing in her practicum. She realized that the purpose of classroom management was to create a positive, safe, caring learning environment. The challenge was how to do this. It was good for Chloe to hear what her peers were seeing and hearing in their classrooms and be reminded of the importance of a good plan and creating a caring classroom. In her practicum classroom, the teacher did not welcome students at the door. While Chloe was at Othello, she has made conscious efforts to be at the door, greeting students, as a way to show them she cares.

Difficult conversations cannot be avoided. Chloe had already experienced a few difficult conversations before her classmates tackled this topic during one of their weekly conversations. She was appreciative of the opportunity to share and collaborate with her peers to work through difficult situations and think about how she could handle them in the future. She valued the insight and openness of her peers to share and process together. Another important consideration, prior to facing difficult conversations, was to build relationships with students and families. Chloe was reminded of her friend's mother who taught second grade. Prior to the first day of school, she hosted a cookout at her home. All of the students and families were invited. This opened the door for fostering relationships and helping to lessen the first day jitters. Chloe considered the conversation about family involvement and the importance of what her friend's mother was doing to build relationships and hopefully encourage families to be involved in the classroom.

When Chloe visited the food bank, she gained much more from this tour, than one she had taken in a previous semester. Her first visit involved sorting granola bars and preparing them for distribution; this visit taught her much more. She learned about the organization, its purpose, and how people were helped through their work. She was excited about the upcoming Tailgate event where she would be able to place much needed goods in the hands of people in need.

Despite many obstacles, Chloe learned that Dr. Ben Carson was a person who rose above his circumstances and was able to succeed. Chloe enjoyed viewing the movie with her peers and seeing how educators have the responsibility to instill hope and perseverance in their students. Chloe vowed to make every student feel included and valued in her classroom. She also wanted to provide every child with the opportunity to dream and reach those dreams of success.

Chloe had several reminders of the importance of her immersive experience throughout the semester. She commented to family and friends about the absence of tests and quizzes, but the presence of learning at a much deeper level. She felt that her fellow future educators who were completing practicum at other schools, were not gaining as much as she and her peers. She was able to take what she was learning in her coursework, apply it to her practicum experience, and reflect on experiences with her peers and professors. She continued to feel blessed by her involvement this semester.

The instruction in the campus classroom opened Chloe's eyes and helped her become a more knowledgeable and better-prepared future teacher. As the semester neared its end, Chloe felt exhausted and overwhelmed with the amount of work she had to do. Many items would be due in the last few weeks, and Chloe wasn't sure how she would finish everything. She worked on her digital story highlighting the community, with a peer. This process helped her realize the importance of technology—especially the effective use of it in the classroom setting. Chloe could see the benefits of using movie-making apps and other software in her own classroom as another avenue to creating culturally relevant experiences for students.

Chloe really enjoyed the class session on creating a culturally relevant classroom and applying much of what she had been learning during the semester. She was grouped with her peers to create a CRP lesson for students of Hispanic descent. They researched the student population to identify learning strengths and important cultural connections, in order to make the lesson engaging. What Chloe took away from the experience, was the need for CRP in all classrooms, especially for CLD learners. She also found it important to incorporate culture in settings where there was little diversity (e.g., anti-bias curriculum). She realized that her own

experience would have been enriched through exposure to diversity and seeing different images of CLD persons.

When Chloe read the article on grades and assessment, she reflected on what this meant to her as a future teacher. She didn't like the way grades affected students and how they felt about them. She recalled a student in her practicum having very negative feelings about himself, when he received a "D." Despite reassuring him of his capabilities, the student felt he was stupid. Chloe felt frustrated by the student's reaction and struggled with grading papers and putting an "F" on the paper of a first grader. She didn't agree with the grading policies, especially when most students couldn't make the "A" Honor Roll. This reading led Chloe to value the importance of feedback and desire to incorporate this in her teaching.

School is more than textbooks and worksheets. Chloe's first look at Othello Elementary was impressive. She felt the school was an amazing place for children to spend time learning and developing. Her initial thoughts were that the school was well-organized and that the teachers truly cared about their students. She was very excited to find out which grade she would be teaching and see her classroom. Chloe was also impressed by the principal and thought she was the type of person she would enjoy working for some day.

Chloe was excited and nervous on her first day of practicum. As she followed her professor to her classroom, she became more nervous. Upon meeting her collaborating teacher, Chloe began to relax. Her teacher was very welcoming and informing, giving Chloe helpful information before the students arrived. The students entered the classroom in what Chloe felt was a pretty orderly fashion, despite a warning from the teacher to expect otherwise. Chloe made several observations the first day that would help her throughout the semester. She noticed her teacher usually delivered instruction from the front of the class, while the students remained

seated. There was a lot of structure; students needed permission to get out of their seats, use the restroom, sharpen pencils, etc. This was a different style of management than Chloe was used to; she wondered if this would better suit a more diverse student population. She recalled her class discussions about management and the importance of students needing structure and rules, coupled with love and respect. It would be important for Chloe to find a balance between structure and caring.

Another observation Chloe made, was that students in her classroom were placed in groups, but often expected to work silently. She felt this did not align with her understanding of Vygotsky and students being able to share and collaborate with each other, in meaningful ways. During the first few days of practicum, Chloe's teacher mentioned teaching most lessons through large group instruction and gradually giving students more independence to work on tasks. Chloe found this beneficial to her future instruction in reading and creating lessons for technology instruction, something she learned about in her campus classroom experience.

At the end of the day, Chloe wrote down five questions she had about her experience. Her questions were: How do you create an interactive lesson that will keep the students interested? Is a big class bathroom break the best use of time? Does the *Class Dojo* point system (online behavior management program) really work? Should it be private? Are desks with chairs really effective for first graders? Is yelling an effective way to get students on task? These questions ran through her mind on the first days and weeks of practicum.

Chloe felt less nervous on her second day, but was challenged by student behavior. When she asked a student to quiet down a little, the student didn't like being interrupted and questioned her authority. Repeating the child's name didn't seem to help the situation; he continued to talk, after giving Chloe a look and rolling his eyes. Her classroom teacher

intervened and supported Chloe, eliminating future challenges to her authority. Later in the semester, Chloe had the opportunity to work one-on-one with this particular student and establish a relationship with him.

The week ended on a positive note. Chloe was able to work with a student who was struggling and whose desk was separated from the rest of the group. Spending five minutes with this student made a difference. Chloe was able to encourage him to complete his work and give him a much-needed boost. She also felt that she had established a relationship with the student and helped him see that he could be successful, an important message for all students to receive. This brief interaction with one student further affirmed Chloe in her decision to teach.

It didn't take Chloe long to learn the names of her students. She felt this was important and appreciated by her students. She also felt that the students were beginning to enjoy her being part of their classroom community. Students approached her for help and talked with her when time permitted.

Chloe spent a full day in the classroom and valued seeing it in its entirety. She was surprised by how little time there was in the day and how little "down time" her teacher had during the day. Substituting in her hometown, Chloe noted having opportunities during her day to sit down and collect her thoughts. Her teacher was with the students most of the day and even worked through her lunchtime. She also noted the content covered throughout the day. Chloe was troubled by the fact students spent their entire day on language arts and mathematics. She thought it was sad that science and history were not part of the regular instructional day. Chloe valued these content areas and felt they needed to be part of the students' experience.

Chloe attended Othello's Open House and was excited to meet the families of her students. The principal welcomed everyone and gave a special introduction of Chloe and her

peers to the audience, validating their presence at Othello. Chloe enjoyed meeting about eight parents in the classroom. She observed the students who attended and noted some showed their parents the entire classroom, while others just wanted to show off their desk and leave. Overall, it was a good evening and Chloe gained insights about her students and their families.

Despite the following week being jam-packed, Chloe didn't feel overwhelmed. She was beginning to feel more comfortable in the classroom and bonding with her students. They often asked if she would stay for the entire day. She set a goal of establishing personal connections with one or two children each day, to let them know she truly cared about them and valued them as individuals. She felt this was an important part of her experience at Othello. Some days it was more difficult to make connections with the students, but Chloe didn't give up.

During an early practicum visit, one of Chloe's first graders seemed troubled as they were sitting in the hallway. When she approached the student, he said, "I'm stupid!" He was fixating on the grades he received and felt that a "D" or "F" indicated he was less than intelligent. He also expressed frustration with not being able to control his hands. Chloe tried to reassure the student that grades did not mean everything; she talked about her own experience with grades. Chloe hoped that one day, he would experience success in the classroom and feel "smart." She also talked about his ability to control his hands and actions, reassuring him that he could do what he put his mind to doing. Chloe would spend additional time with this student in the future. He had several stories to tell her. She enjoyed these stories because of the students' animated nature and ability to draw her in as a listener.

Just listening to the student gave Chloe additional insight into who he was and what he was dealing with outside of school. The young man, who attended speech class, was difficult to understand when he was frustrated and tried to speak rapidly. She also noticed that he quickly

jumped from topic to topic during their conversation. He even felt comfortable enough to share something about his home situation with Chloe—he did not sleep in a bed because someone else was now occupying that space.

Chloe was excited about using technology with her students. She made use of the SMART Board for an activity. The students responded with enthusiasm; they seemed to be more attentive and engaged in the lesson. Chloe realized this was something to keep in mind for future lessons. That same week, Chloe taught her first official lesson. The night before was spent preparing materials, tweaking the lesson, and making sure everything was set. She felt good about being in front of her students and that things went well. Chloe read a book that connected to the students' cultural background. The children loved the story and asked her to read it again. Chloe was a little disappointed by her teacher's comment about the students' talking during the lesson. The teacher felt there was too much talking from the students and that they were a little loud. Chloe knew her style of teaching and acceptable level of "noise" was different from her teacher. She decided to watch this in the future, in order to keep in line with the classroom teacher's expectations. Teaching felt good! Chloe walked away with positive feelings about teaching and feedback for improving the lesson next time.

Chloe served dinner at the Othello Fish Fry. It felt good helping at a school function and seeing students and families. Although the evening was hectic, Chloe was able to enjoy the entertainment, led by students and the principal. Chloe was impressed with the principal's joining in the fun and dancing alongside the students. She took this as another indication of how much the principal cared for the students. Chloe also noted the comfort level of the students being on stage; they seemed to thrive in this atmosphere. She knew this was something to keep

in mind with future students, particularly when considering CRP. The fact that students enjoyed entertaining their families was something to keep in mind when planning lessons.

Chloe felt a little disappointed about the level of family engagement in her classroom. She met some parents at Open House and knew that her collaborating teacher sent home regular newsletters to families. It was sad to think some parents hadn't met their child's teacher several weeks into the school year. At the fish fry, a few parents asked if Chloe was their child's teacher. She found this a little shocking. She also noted that a student was bringing her weekly folder back to school with all of the papers still in it. Chloe felt this was something a teacher should be concerned about and look into the reason why.

Chloe taught her second lesson on fact and opinion. The SMART Board was a hit with the students, but her worksheet was a little difficult for students to complete. Various learning levels had some students finishing early, while others struggled to complete their papers. Those who finished early, began to talk and become restless. Chloe realized this was a management piece she would have to consider, carefully, in future lessons.

A short week provided Chloe with another opportunity to stay in the classroom all day. She was excited about being with her students for a full day, as were the students. They asked several times if she was sure she'd be there all day. Chloe took advantage of the extended time to bond and form relationships with students. She also observed the students in different environments throughout the day. One of her favorite times of the day was recess. Chloe saw students outside, enjoying the weather, running, laughing, and playing without restrictions. She liked seeing the students enjoy their freedom and just be children. Chloe noted the benefits to having recess and allowing students to exercise their freedom.

As part of her practicum experience, Chloe observed in another classroom. She was scheduled to see a male, fifth grade teacher, but ended up observing his student teacher. She noted the differences in instruction and independence between first and fifth graders. Later in the week, Chloe accompanied her students on a field trip to the children's museum. She had not been to this particular museum, and was anxious to join her students in exploring. It was exciting to see all of the students explore and test various items, especially in an open environment conducive to exploration and inquiry. Students were encouraged to exercise creativity and utilize skills that are not used while sitting at a desk.

That afternoon was spent celebrating students' good behavior and then having their fall party. This was a chaotic afternoon, which Chloe felt could have been more organized. Handing out cookies and candy created a very loud environment and didn't go as smoothly as Chloe's teacher planned.

Chloe's third lesson went well. She taught about short vowels, using a Halloween theme. The students enjoyed the lesson. Chloe had to deal with technology from the beginning of the lesson. The SMART Board would not work properly, so Chloe had to make an adjustment and work around the technology. Despite minor glitches, Chloe enjoyed opportunities to teach and gain experience. She was learning more from teaching and reflecting on her lessons than she imagined.

Something Chloe struggled with was how to include all children in classroom instruction and discipline in a fair way. This was hard for Chloe to address, because sometimes patience with interruptions and distractions was challenging. Chloe thought about her brother who had been diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger's syndrome. She witnessed his struggles because he didn't understand and had less than compassionate teachers. She knew that some of

his disengagement was due to his high ability, autism, and ADHD. Chloe observed some of her brother's tendencies in a current student.

Receiving a new student in the classroom was not easy and was foreign to Chloe. She thought about all the details required when a new student arrived: making them feel welcome, assessing their performance levels, teaching rules and procedures. Chloe had not been the new student in her school experience and wondered how this would feel. She tried to make the student feel welcome in the classroom. Chloe also experienced the loss of two students who moved away. There was no warning, so Chloe didn't have the opportunity to say good-bye or bring closure to their leaving. She wrestled with their leaving and hoped they would be okay at their new school.

Chloe's last lesson required her to teach fifteen minutes of writing time. At first, this was less than thrilling, but she decided to make the first part of the lesson more exciting and culturally relevant. She dressed in costume, showed a video, and brought the students up close to her for instruction. These stimulating pieces of the lesson allowed the children to stay interested and engaged the entire time. Her collaborating teacher sent an encouraging email that evening, thanking her for the effort put into the lesson and the way it was delivered.

Dealing with a student who was extremely upset, reminded Chloe, once again, that she needed to tune in to the students so she could recognize when they were troubled. One student was extremely upset and couldn't seem to calm himself down. He complained of being ill, so Chloe took him to the nurse. She discovered the next day that the young man was troubled by his parents fighting at home. Chloe felt bad finding out this information and planned to make a space in her classroom for students to go when they were feeling troubled and try to regroup.

The last week of practicum stirred up mixed emotions in Chloe. She was excited to be reaching the end of the journey and having accomplished much in her teaching. She was very sad to think about leaving the students, especially after establishing relationships with them over the weeks.

Chloe's final day in the classroom was a good one. Her collaborating teacher prepared the students for her leaving, but she didn't feel ready to say goodbye. Chloe realized how much the children had taught her and how they affected her in so many different ways. She gave each child a copy of *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Book*, and wrote a poem and personal note on the inside cover. She hoped that the children could read the notes and understand how much she cared for them later on. At the end of the school day, the children wrote notes and drew pictures. Rather than walking around the room and certain students coming up to show what they had drawn or written, Chloe did not look at them until she was home, and ended up crying. Many of the students drew themselves crying and wrote that they would miss her. A few students even drew Chloe in her Pilgrim outfit and said that they enjoyed that lesson.

After-school where learning continues. Participating in the after-school program was completely overwhelming in the beginning. Chloe observed the children entering the community center with great excitement and energy. The structure of the school day was not the same as the after-school program. The students didn't want to settle down and do homework; they wanted freedom. Chloe hoped this would improve as time went by and the students settled into the schedule of the program. It didn't take long for the students to begin to settle into the routine of the program. Chloe noticed their behavior had improved the very next week. Students were still wound up, but they were better behaved and participated in the

activities Chloe and her peers planned. She felt more structure and planned lessons would continue to improve behavior.

One of Chloe's tasks was to do a reading interview with a student. The student Chloe had to interview was less than thrilled to participate. He was slow to comply with her and answer the questions. He kept asking if they were done and said he didn't like reading. Chloe was determined to take what little information she gained and turn it into an opportunity for this young man to be a life-long reader. She worked to select books that would be interesting to the student and some that reflected his cultural background.

Chloe and her classmates met with after-school personnel to discuss their unit on *Dreams*, which they planned and taught. She valued hearing the staff's opinions on how best to reach these students because they knew their families and how the students would react. The thought of planning and teaching a unit, then celebrating with a culminating event was exciting to Chloe. She was anxious to get started and collaborate with her peers.

Chloe's enthusiasm continued to build each day as she planned with her peers and shared ideas about what they would do with the after-school students. She hoped that parents would attend the dinner and participate in the videotaping they were incorporating into the unit. Chloe realized their input was critical to the success of the unit and making the experience more meaningful to everyone involved.

Chloe and two of her classmates invested a good deal of time and energy in planning the "Practicing Dreams," portion of the unit. They worked as a team to brainstorm ideas and then put them into place for the students. They made a list of ideas and attempted to come up with a plan to satisfy the standards and critical skills, along with other information and activities the

children to accomplish. They worked diligently to incorporate the literacy framework that students were familiar with (Daily 5) as part of the unit.

Chloe tutored one-on-one as part of the after-school experience. The first day of tutoring, actually went pretty, well despite how nervous and unprepared Chloe felt. She tutored an African American girl in the second grade. Most lessons started out with a picture walk through a book at her level. On one occasion, the student did not start out well because she was distracted. After they got started, she did pay better attention and got in a better mood. After the picture walk, Chloe asked the student to read the story to her. She obliged but had trouble with some of the words; Chloe made note of difficult words for future discussion. With Chloe's support, the student became excited and impressed with herself and ready to continue reading. Once the student cooperated, all went very well. The student didn't want to go back into the classroom when it was time! Chloe had a great experience and could not wait to continue working with her student and see her progress throughout the remaining weeks!

During the "Practicing Dreams" phase of the unit, Chloe taught the first lesson. Overall, she felt it went pretty well. They started out with the hula-hoop game where the students held hands in a circle and passed the hula-hoop. The students enjoyed that game a lot, and they even showed a lot of teamwork! Afterwards they had a great conversation about teamwork and why people needed to work together and ask for help when achieving their dreams. The students were very chatty throughout the lesson and while giving directions, but a staff member helped keep the group under control. Chloe noticed the students seemed to listen to the staff member far better than they listen to her peers. During the center time, Chloe read the book, *Freedom Summer* and facilitated a discussion on how this related to the local pool. The students drew pictures of their dreams for the community. Chloe was a little nervous about reading the book to

the children because it was such a controversial topic and she was not sure how they would take it. Fortunately, the students were very respectful, listened to the story, and had a good conversation. This was another example of having a difficult conversation, but it was important to teach the children the truth about these events.

Chloe was very impressed by how some of the students reacted to the lessons, especially the dreams for their community. One student made a beautiful and in depth picture of his dreams for his community. Chloe was very impressed and proud of his work! While some of the students were bored with this work and did not try, others worked really hard and gave much in depth thought about topics. Chloe experienced the importance of communicating throughout teaching the unit. Because her peers were all teaching different lessons on various days, it was important to touch base with one another and inform each other of progress, challenges, and things that needed to be done.

Once again, Chloe was reminded of the importance of technology and how it could motivate the children excited to learn. For the most part, students were not interested in academic activities during the after-school program. Incorporating the SMART Board excited the students and kept their attention during the lesson. Chloe used a website that allowed the students to play a multitude of different games reviewing math facts and sight words. The students were eager and willing to spend a great deal of time at the station playing on the SMART Board and learning. It was amazing to see how well they reacted to this kind of activity as compared to a different activity they may have completed at their seats.

As the weeks passed, Chloe felt better about her work in the after-school program. She was learning names of students and beginning to build relationships. The students began to settle

into the routine and respond well to Chloe's authority. She helped with homework, talked to students during snack time, and tutored one-on-one in reading.

Chloe used many of the reading strategies she learned in class with her student. Over time, Chloe noticed that the strategies were helping her student become a better reader. She was excited about seeing this growth. She also noted that the additional attention her student was receiving was beneficial. The little girl seemed to enjoy the one-on-one time and special attention she received during tutoring. Chloe planned to make time for students in her classroom.

The *Dreams* unit came to a close with a special dinner for the students and their families. It was very successful and it went even better than planned! Tensions ran high as Chloe and her peers made all the final preparations. Families started to arrive and people seemed to settle into enjoying the meal and listen to how the evening's agenda. Chloe was glad to see the students cared about the work they had been doing. She felt the parents really appreciated the evening; many took time to comment on the event and the time Chloe and her peers invested. The family interviews went very well; all of the planning was advantageous. It was definitely a successful event, and one Chloe would remember in the future. It was important for the families to hear about their children's dreams and for the children to hear their parents' dreams for them. Chloe was exhausted by the end of the evening, but looked forward to pulling everything together for the final video project.

The importance of community. During the first week, Chloe and her peers met their community mentors. As Chloe thought back on the week, it was easy to connect the early camp experience with the community and cooperation her mentor Mrs. D. described in the community. Just as Chloe and her peers had to come together, brainstormed, and cooperated to finish tasks at

camp, community members had done the same to improve their home. Only through their cooperation, passion, and hard work had they been able to restore the place they loved.

This was not all Chloe learned about the community. During the neighborhood walk, the close-knit community inspired her as did the stories shared by her mentor and others. One married couple, serving as mentors, waved to everyone they saw and knew them by name. Coming from a small town, Chloe could often walk down the street and recognize people. She hadn't expected this in the city where she was attending college, nor in this community. This reinforced her idea of how close knit the community truly was. Chloe was also amazed by the pride she saw on the community members faces as they described and presented their community to her peers. She loved hearing from them about their community and she couldn't wait to get to know more through immersing herself.

Each year the community hosted an annual Black Tie event. The evening served as a fundraiser for the local community center. Chloe thought it was amazing how everyone pulled together in order to keep the community center up and running. It was a time to reminisce on all of the wonderful programs the center offered in order to keep the children of the community safe and off the streets. Chloe thought this was a great effort on the part of the community members and that other towns could benefit from a center like that one.

A pivotal experience for Chloe was the community literacy event. She was overcome with emotions of nervousness, excitement, and apprehension as she prepared to share the canon of literature with community members. The day began with having breakfast with her mentor. Chloe was happy to see her and anxious to hear what she thought of the books they selected. Having breakfast with Mrs. D was calming for Chloe and generated feelings of wanting more time with this respected member of the community.

Chloe and her peers gave several books talks about the literature they selected, as community members travelled from table to table. The magnitude of this event was understood when Chloe caught a glimpse of the hearts of community members. She learned so much from the mentors as they shared personal stories and commentaries on the books presented. Through the mentors' stories, Chloe learned that times of racial tension and struggles of marginalized people were much closer than she had always imagined. Chloe would not have been aware of these and other issues CLD students are still facing, had it not been for this event.

By the end of the event, Chloe felt a sense of accomplishment and pride in knowing that she and her peers had selected good literature. The community members commented on the experience and their approval of the selections. Chloe knew that she would add several titles to her personal collection. She appreciated the time the mentors devoted to attending the event and sharing their stories. Their commitment and love for the children was evident as they explained how much this event meant to the community members and the role they were asked to play in it. Chloe was so moved and amazed by this.

During the semester, Chloe had several opportunities to partake in community events in order to truly gain better insight. She felt taking time to do so helped her gain a better understanding of the community and her students. She attended Zumba class at the church; this was good for her physical health and fun getting to know people. Chloe attended a community council meeting and a church service. She also had dinner at her mentor's home. She believed that all of these experiences were beneficial and provided insight into the community, while stretching her as an educator and a person.

Chloe returned to the food bank for participation in the morning at Tailgate event. She and her peers served almost one thousand cars, a very rewarding and humbling experience.

Touring the facilities was not as influential as actually seeing the faces and loading the cars of people who were in need. She talked to families as she helped load food into their cars. Some families had been waiting four or five hours in order to ensure that they received the extra food. Chloe could not imagine wondering as a child if there would be enough food for her or if she would get to eat. This was humbling for Chloe and helped her realize that children may go through so much more than she could ever imagine. As a teacher, she would need to keep this in mind because they might have so many other things on their minds besides school.

Conceptualizing the experience. In Chloe's conceptual framework, she added a blurb every week about where she was in the process of becoming culturally competent and understanding the connections between home and family, school, and community. Chloe described how her original perceptions of students changed greatly as she became immersed in a much different school setting than what she had experienced.

She recorded her thoughts and feelings about the immersive learning experience and how she was making sense of what she saw and heard. Chloe also added notes about the things she wrestled with as a future teacher. Management was always on her mind as she prepared to teach lessons. She made notes about how her understanding and style of management was in comparison to her collaborating teacher's.

Chloe described her feelings in the school and how the classroom structure differed greatly from what she knew as a student. She talked about observing the classroom procedures and talking with her collaborating teacher about teaching. She also focused on her first day in the school and touring the local library, as preparation for preparing the canon of African American literature. During the semester, Chloe described the two main aspects which she struggled to understand: classroom management and engagement. She hoped to plan exciting and engaging

lessons that the students would enjoy. She believed classroom management issues would diminish when lessons included CRP strategies and engaged students.

Chloe highlighted how much she learned about her students and how beneficial that was in the classroom; this reinforced the importance of forming relationships. She mentioned attending community events and how these shaped her understanding communities and people. She made connections between content, the elementary classroom, and the community. These connections enabled her to make the information relevant to understanding her own philosophy of teaching and what she believed.

Each week, Chloe's conceptual framework grew into something that chronicled her journey, showing the highs and lows of her experiences. Throughout the semester, Chloe grew as a teacher and in her understanding of CRP and cultural competence. Her final representation of this journey was depicted by a flower. She concluded her framework by returning to the beginning of her experience. She reevaluated her initial statements and perceptions of the community, school, and students. Chloe considered how her thinking had been shaped over time and what new learning she took away from the immersive learning experience. She captured the essence of her semester's activities in her conceptual framework.

Becoming Chloe. It was not difficult to imagine Chloe in her own elementary classroom one day. However, knowing that she came from a place with little diversity, one might think the CLD classroom would prove to be too big a challenge for her. This was not the case for Chloe. She had openness to learning that allowed her to embrace every opportunity to explore and grow toward cultural competence.

One thing about Chloe was her ability to see the big picture and know there were several pieces that held the key to truly understanding CRP. She was ready to immerse herself in school

and community activities, surrounding herself with people and places she didn't know and situate herself in places where she became a minority. She wanted to meet her students, begin to spread her wings as a teacher, and do the work required to become culturally competent. She also grew to recognize the power and importance of relationships. In her journal, Chloe wrote,

"It was so great to have time just to sit and form relationships with the students....I think that forming relationships is one of the most important things to being a teacher. This idea was reinforced by the movie we watched Wednesday afternoon, "Stand and Deliver." The teacher in the movie formed relationships with his students and truly believed in them in order that they may succeed.

Chloe later realized on more than one occasion just how important the investment of time was to her students. She later wrote about the value and joy of relationships. Chloe stated,

"I am beginning to know each of the students better and this allows me to understand their needs... I am learning to love each and every child in there and help him or her in any way that I can."

One of the most impressive qualities of Chloe was her ability to take in what she observed, heard, or read, then analyze and synthesize it. She was always thinking about how her readings and class activities applied to her practicum and future as a teacher; she made powerful connections. Early in her immersive learning experience, Chloe learned about Urie Brofenbrenner's theory of systems. She recognized how important this was to understanding her students. Chloe shared the following:

"It is important for children to have these different connections because the more connections a child has, the healthier the development....A child who has a loving support system around him or her, the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities, and

the services available to fulfill his or her needs is much more likely to succeed and develop correctly than a child who does not.... As a teacher, I have a role in each of the children's systems, and I believe it is my job to provide loving support and care for the children as much as I can. I will begin to practice this during this semester and continually attempt to allow children to form these connections and have the opportunities that they deserve."

Once Chloe began teaching in the classroom, she kept Brofenbrenner's theory in mind, because she played an important role in her students' systems.

As Chloe's engaged in experiences during the semester, she continued to move closer to becoming culturally competent. Whether it was a trip to the library, staying for the after-school program, or spending a full day in school, Chloe was eager to implement what she learned. She was always looking to make those connections between theory and practice that would make her the best possible teacher. She took advantage of community events and reflected on how they helped her see their ability to impact CRP. She stated,

"Over the past eight weeks, I have had the opportunity to partake in many community events in order to truly gain...better insight into the...community. I think I have learned a lot that has helped me in the classroom as well as getting to know the students better."

Chloe embraced the immersive learning experience and tried to make the most of her time by not only attending events, but by being an active participant.

When Chloe began teaching, she drew from the class discussions and community activities to create engaging lessons that included CRP. She even did what she felt was the right thing, when it wasn't the customary practice of the teacher. Reflecting on her lesson, Chloe stated,

[The students] did a great job of following along, answering questions, and finishing the activities that I had planned. I cannot wait to begin planning another lesson! One thing my

teacher did critique me on was that I allowed them to talk too much. This was difficult because my teacher does not allow any talking at all whereas the talking, as long as it is not too loud, does not bother me as much. However, I will keep that in mind next time.... I was able to understand the importance of implementing culturally relevant aspects of the lesson because it allowed the children to connect and understand the concept better. I think that overall the lesson went really well and the children learned a lot through it and were able to make connections outside of my lesson.”

She carried over what she learned from the faculty and continued to create lessons that the students enjoyed and remembered.

During an observation, Chloe was teaching her first graders about the Mayflower. Knowing that her students did not have a direct connection to the Mayflower, she created a context for the students to better understand how people dressed during that time, by wearing a simple costume. She simulated the feeling of being on a ship, by having her students sit close together. Chloe then showed a video of a ship on the high sea. She took the time to explain what was happening and how their voyage was progressing. This helped her students engage in the lesson and get a feel for what it was like to be at sea. The class was excited to write their stories on a suitcase template. Chloe knew how to bridge those gaps in students’ experiences and bring life to the content. She was also very comfortable in facilitating the role play with her class.

Chloe was a proponent of CLD literature and tried to use it in her lessons as whenever possible. She learned early in her practicum that students loved books and were eager to be read to. Chloe was appreciative of her coursework focusing on good children’s literature and recognized the power it held. Chloe noted,

“I am learning more about the importance of culturally responsive books and how important it is that children see themselves and can connect to books. This will encourage students to read and allow them to acquire a love for reading. As we continue to search for the “canon” of African American Children’s literature, I become increasingly excited to collaborate with our mentors and other community members in order to truly understand what makes up a good culturally diverse book.”

She took information about multicultural literature and applied it as much as possible. She learned how she could capture the interest of her students and use literature as a powerful way to assist them in making connections to critical content.

Chloe took to the immersive learning experience like a fish to water. She was not hesitant to dive in and try new things. Her enthusiasm and joy in participating was evidenced in how hard she worked and the time she invested in community events, getting to know students, and planning for them. Chloe’s experience in a non-traditional college setting was summed up as follows:

“I keep telling my friends and family that I may not be taking any tests, quizzes, or doing group projects, but I am learning so much. I have learned so much more about teaching in these past nine weeks than I have my entire career here....Connecting the articles and discussions we have in class with my practicum experience is so beneficial for me....I am actually able to immerse myself in this culture and in this classroom in order to create meaningful lessons. Students who go to [other schools] to teach two lessons to students they don’t know will not learn as much as we are....their lessons will not be as meaningful or beneficial for the students in the classroom because the pre-service teachers do not know the

kids and understand their lives and culture....we are having the opportunity to do just that and I feel so blessed and fortunate to be able to participate in this program!"

Throughout the immersive learning experience, Chloe continued to think and process the experience from a global perspective. She appreciated the depth of her experience and how each little experience connected and led her to being culturally competent and able to implement CRP strategies with confidence.

As Chloe concluded the semester as part of the immersive learning experience, she left with good feelings about what she had learned and been able to accomplish. She looked back on her initial understanding, perceptions, and knowledge of CRP and cultural competence and reflected on how she had grown. She addressed her initial stereotypical views of the community and replaced them with new, accurate knowledge. She fell in love with her students and learned the value of diversity in the classroom; cultures and perspectives different from hers shed new light. She made connections with students, families, and community members. Chloe learned the importance of listening to others and allowing the voices of all parties to be heard. For Chloe, the concept of being a life-long learner was solidified throughout this experience. She was always learning and looked forward to continuing to learn beyond her immersive learning semester.

Priscilla Fox

Priscilla's amazing journey toward cultural competence

Meeting Priscilla Fox reminded me of a phrase my grandmother used to use: "Still waters run deep." At first glance, Priscilla seemed shy and quiet, but once she became comfortable in the group, she opened up and contributed much to the conversation.

Priscilla, a White female, grew up in a very small suburban town in the Midwest. She lived with her parents, older brother, sister, and younger brother. She recalled having fun growing up with her siblings and quite often played school with her younger brother. She took partial credit for his success in school because of her early teaching. The experience of teaching her brother also played a role in her future decision to teach.

Working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners was one of Priscilla's goals. She had chosen to major in elementary education and seek licensure in English as a New Language (ENL). This additional area of licensing complemented her Spanish minor. Priscilla, a junior, was a very bright young woman who participated in the university's honors program. She enjoyed school and had enough credits to be classified as a senior.

When Priscilla was not in school, she enjoyed reading, learning other languages—Spanish and French, and working with children. She spent her summers working as a day camp counselor for five to seven year-olds. This was something she really enjoyed and looked forward to doing each summer. Camp counseling was affirmation of her decision to teach and had proven to be great fun.

Being part of the immersive learning experience was something Priscilla looked forward to. She looked forward to getting to know her classmates and learning and growing during this amazing opportunity.

Priscilla described her semester of immersive learning as an “amazing experience.” During her fifteen week journey, Priscilla took in many opportunities and events that helped her learn about the students, families, school, and community. Early on, she embraced the experience and learned so much through the class discussions, meeting her mentor, and spending some quality time with peers.

One of the earliest activities that left a lasting impression on Priscilla was attending a local camp with her peers. When she first learned about the camp experience, Priscilla admitted the thought of engaging in physical activities was not something she embraced with gusto. Priscilla was anxious about this venture because she did not know many of her peers; she described herself as rather shy and introverted. After getting involved in the activities, Priscilla began to see the importance of the overall experience—building relationships. Her peers were supportive, encouraging, and fun to be with. She learned about the importance of communication, perseverance, and trust, and challenged herself to overcome her fear of heights and became a “cautious warrior.”

One of the class discussions that Priscilla valued was the history of the city and community where she would be during the semester. It was interesting to hear the historical context and understand the community and its residents. She listened intently as historians and community members shared their stories, giving life and meaning to the places she would visit.

It was not long before Priscilla and her peers began tackling the “hard stuff.” During the second week, Priscilla started learning about biases—acknowledging and addressing them. The *Body ritual of the Nacirema* (Miner, 1956) reminded her of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ separation that happens all too quickly in society. Priscilla was up front in acknowledging her biases and working to keep them from affecting her experiences and ideas about the children and families she would encounter this semester.

One of the most eye-opening experiences was the Poverty Simulation. Priscilla lived the life of “Iris,” a 19 year-old high school dropout. She and her boyfriend lived in a trailer with her one year old son. Priscilla learned about humility, frustration, and the difficulties of living on limited financial and educational resources. When the facilitator stated the simulation had come

to an end, Priscilla was not able to shift gears and go back to her way of living. She listened to the volunteers who shared their stories of poverty and wrestled with the huge differences in their lives and her own. It was physically and emotionally draining to process what she experienced in the simulation, knowing this was reality for many people.

Priscilla had always been an avid reader, but during Reading coursework, she came to learn so much about children's literature—specifically, multicultural literature. She gained new insights as to what made a book culturally relevant and a positive reflection of the culture. Exploring numerous pieces of African American literature reminded Priscilla of the importance of reading and how much she enjoyed books growing up. Although she had taken a course in children's literature prior to this experience, it didn't provide her with the tools needed for reaching CLD students. Priscilla anticipated learning much that would apply to her semester's work and beyond.

Courage—what a word with so much behind it—emotion, responsibility, cause for action. As part of her experience Priscilla engaged in *Courageous Conversations* with peers and professors. She gained new insights about those making the journey with her and where they were in the process of becoming culturally competent. One very early and impactful conversation involved debriefing the *Privilege Walk*. This created a vivid image of how two people can sit next to each other, share similar interests, but be very different. She observed how privilege separated her from her peers and even professors. Priscilla appreciated what she had been given in life, but was saddened by some of her peers lack of access. She felt a sense of guilt as she looked around the room and observed her peers and professors. Priscilla was reminded of her family and how much she missed them—the connections to one another. Her mother was always involved during those early school days. She showed Priscilla how much she cared by

being present. In light of the article she read on minority status and school success (Ogbu, 1992), Priscilla wondered how this information would come into play during her experience at school. Priscilla felt certain that practicum would provide opportunities to see and hear much in the way of teaching and learning. It would also open the door to begin applying what she was learning in class.

Priscilla found the Reading Conference to be interesting and informative. She enjoyed being in a professional setting and learning new ideas. She valued the session on incorporating music in the classroom, but was disappointed in the implementing technology session. She felt that it ended up being a sales pitch for products.

Before entering the classroom, Priscilla and her peers explored different theories on classroom management. She was anxious to implement what she learned and felt the timing was good; she was preparing to teach her first lesson in practicum.

During the semester, Priscilla and her peers were welcomed into the local food bank for a tour. Priscilla thought this was very educational. It helped her turn her perceptions and misperceptions of food banks and the people who visit them into factual information.

In class, Priscilla and her peers explored the topic of language. She ended the class session with a greater understanding of language, its use as a foundation and a model. She also learned the importance of not disregarding a child's first language. A child's first experiences with language should be connected to the new information being presented.

Good instruction had to be part of the lessons Priscilla planned for her students. She understood that she must be able to establish connections between the students' prior knowledge and cultural background, and then apply this information to the content. During class, Priscilla and her peers developed and shared CRP lessons. She found it interesting to note

the similarities in all of the lessons. Many of her peers included strategies that connected to the learners' cultural background and made them more interesting and relevant.

Second graders....I can handle them! Priscilla's spirits were lifted when she toured Othello Elementary and the local library. Her first impression of the school was that it was nicer than she expected. As she walked the halls of Othello, she was inspired by the atmosphere of the school—upbeat, positive, bright, well-maintained. Seeing the students and staff excited Priscilla about beginning her teaching experience. The principal was enthusiastic and welcomed her peers and her into the building. Priscilla was very impressed by the data wall. Othello's principal and teachers could view the overall progress of the students, any time of the day, week, or year. They could see where strengths and areas of concern were and establish next steps to improving student progress.

When Priscilla learned that she would be working in a second grade classroom, she was very happy. Her previous experience at camp was with this age group. She was also excited about her teaching partner. Priscilla felt she could develop a good relationship with her peer and would be comfortable teaching with her.

Priscilla's first week in practicum was filled with mixed emotions. There was the excitement of being in the classroom, along with the uncertainty of unfamiliar territory. She spent a full day with her teacher and discovered some of the good and not so good things about the classroom: worksheets galore and the need for small groups. Priscilla also had her first experience being in front of the students. They were attentive, good listeners, and participated. This gave her a good feeling of being in the classroom and trying her wings at teaching.

Poverty in the classroom could not be ignored from the first week. Priscilla had a student share with her about an upcoming absence. She was going to visit a sister who was incarcerated.

What was even more troubling was the thought of her mother possibly going to jail, too. These ripple effects children experienced provided Priscilla with very real examples of how the stress of poverty impacts students.

Othello hosted Open House for families to come and meet the teachers. In preparation for this, students made self-portraits to display for their parents. Priscilla noted that all but two students selected crayons that closely resembled their own skin tone. Priscilla met several of her students' families during Open House. It was great meeting them, but a little disappointing because of the number who attended; there were not many families who visited the classroom. As she talked with parents, she found that they valued education and wanted to help their children be successful. That was indeed a refreshing experience!

Priscilla's first field trip was to accompany her second graders to the same camp where she and her peers visited earlier in the semester. It was eye-opening to see students in a different environment. She enjoyed watching them interact with one another and noted how they behaved outside the school setting. There was a sense of freedom in this informal setting, but learning still took place.

Teaching in front of second graders was a learning experience for both the students and Priscilla. Her first lesson was on beginning, middle, and ending of a story. She learned about the importance of good classroom management being in place. She also learned that unfamiliar procedures can cause chaos. Priscilla tried groups and learned that she would need to do some additional preparation with the students before trying this again. This was good training for her next lesson on fables. She was observed by one of her professors and walked away with suggestions for improvement and reflected on things she would change in the future.

Voice in the elementary classroom was a critical lesson Priscilla learned. She discovered the importance of being assertive, particularly when giving instructions. Priscilla learned that a direct approach was beneficial to the students and getting them to comply. During a lesson, Priscilla asked the students if they wanted to do something; she learned that this was not the best approach in a room filled with second graders. It opened the door to arguments and non-compliance.

Priscilla also learned about the importance of follow through and discipline with her students. She encountered a student who refused to follow instructions. Priscilla asked the student to put away a book and complete the assignment. The student took out the book once Priscilla turned her back. Priscilla took the book and placed it in a different location; the student could read after completing her assignment. Initially, the student was less than happy with Priscilla. She pouted and seemed upset with her; this bothered Priscilla, because she didn't want the student to be angry with her. Later, the same student wanted help. She refused help from the classroom teacher and requested help from Priscilla. This made her feel good about how she had handled the situation with the book and followed through in an assertive and caring way.

As the days went by, students became more and more attached to Priscilla. She received more hugs from the class when arriving and leaving. The thought of leaving these second graders made her sad. After she had been away for Spring Break, Priscilla realized how much she was going to miss her students at the end of the semester.

Priscilla had her 'worst day' after being away from her students for several days. She felt out of sync with the daily routine and interaction with her students. Despite the feelings of being disconnected, Priscilla's lesson went well. The students were engaged and enjoyed the lesson she taught.

Priscilla developed a greater amount of trust and confidence in her teaching when her collaborating teacher invited her to lead two activities. She was excited about teaching, but disappointed by the worksheets the teacher wanted her to use. The students were not as attentive as they could have been, if the activities were more engaging. She also led the students in playing a game. Although the students enjoyed playing the game, Priscilla was not sure how she felt about the competitive nature.

As the semester progressed, Priscilla felt overwhelmed. She had a bulletin board project and several others to complete. She wasn't sure how she would get everything accomplished in the time remaining. Talking with her peers helped her relax and refocus.

Priscilla spent a full day in her classroom and found that it was tiring and tough. There was much to think about and do in the course of a day. At one point, Priscilla froze up because she wasn't sure what to do. Once again, she was reminded of the importance of rules and procedures.

Connecting with students happened for Priscilla many times. She was particularly pleased when the class divided into groups to work with the teacher and her peer. One student asked to be in her group, which made Priscilla feel good about what she was doing in the classroom.

One of the lessons Priscilla was scheduled to teach didn't come at the most opportune time. The class attended an all-school convocation; Priscilla was to teach her lesson right after that. She knew that it would be important to keep the students engaged and utilize CRP strategies. Priscilla applied what she learned in her college classroom and kept the students focused on the lesson's content. This affirmed her understanding of the importance of culturally relevant literature as part of the lessons she planned and taught.

As Priscilla's practicum drew to a close, she became very emotional about the separation. She gave and received many hugs and wrote letters to all of her students. Walking away from the experience, Priscilla gleaned a few lessons that would help her in the future. She noted that her students would complain of illness when they didn't want to do something. She also believed that standardized testing was not the only way to assess students. She felt these were important things to remember for her future in teaching. Overall, Priscilla enjoyed the experience in the second grade classroom and would miss the students, tremendously.

When the school bell rings, after-school begins. The first day of the after school program was a little bumpy. Priscilla felt the stress of being there for the first time, but also managed to have a little fun; she could see that this would be a rewarding experience.

One of the things Priscilla was most excited about was the planning and teaching the *Dreams* unit with her peers. Priscilla found it overwhelming to plan a comprehensive unit, but looked forward to discovering the dreams of each student in the after school program.

In addition to her weekly responsibilities during the after-school program, Priscilla worked one-on-one to tutor a student. She eagerly approached this time to plan activities and teach her student, hoping to increase their achievement in reading. During the one-on-one tutoring sessions, Priscilla listened to and learned from her student. This increased her ability to connect with the child and meet their academic needs.

When the *Dreams* unit finally came together, Priscilla was excited. It was stressful, but rewarding. She was amazed at the amount of work required and the short period of time to accomplish everything. But, working with her peers provided a system that allowed the evening to run smoothly. They worked together to know who had been interviewed, who was responsible, and what tasks were essential to completing the data collection.

Community connections to people, places, and their passion. When Priscilla met her community mentor, she felt an instant bond with her. Mrs. O was an elderly, African American woman who was a long-time resident of the community. Mrs. O did not stand very tall, physically, but in her community, she was a giant; one who was respected by those who knew her. After their initial time of getting acquainted, the mentors accompanied the students on a neighborhood tour. Mrs. O drove Priscilla and one of her peers around the community, pointing out places that they needed to know about. She provided the backstory and important historical context to the shops, churches, and places within the community. Priscilla was impressed by the reception Mrs. O received during the community tour. She was greeted by everyone, always with "Mrs.," as a sign of respect. She was inspired by Mrs. O in the few hours they spent during this first meeting. Priscilla hoped to gain even a small percentage of the confidence Mrs. O possessed.

Priscilla took advantage of a very special opportunity to be involved with the community. The local community center held its annual fundraiser, where community members gathered to celebrate and support the center. Priscilla described the event's speaker as incredible, powerful, and passionate. Being there to experience the event showed her what can be accomplished by people coming together for a good cause. She witnessed the strong ties to the community, the values, and respect the community members had for their home. Physical distance from the community didn't lessen the feelings of pride and wanting to come home. Priscilla was very impressed and talked about the gala event with her father; he recognized the speaker's name and shared with Priscilla his recollections.

Priscilla attended Grandparents' Night at the neighborhood library. She described the event as powerful. She was impressed with the time beginning with prayer. Priscilla noted the

importance of knowing the community where you are working. It was exciting to see everyone coming together and caring about the children. She heard a clear message from the community about how much they invested in the students and their success. Much of the discussion focused on how essential it was to nurture and pay attention to children, to provide quality time, and serve as a positive model for them. She recalled one grandparent saying, “When you don’t discipline your kids, the court system will.” The gathering of grandparents emphasized the importance of community and their supporting children in their educational endeavors.

When the community held its annual Fall Clean Up, Priscilla attended and worked alongside community members to spruce up the neighborhood. She enjoyed talking with community members as she worked, gaining more insight into the area. Priscilla also took advantage of the opportunity to help at the Food Bank Tailgate event. She thought it was great for people to have access to fresh fruit and vegetables, through this program. She found the entire experience rewarding. Priscilla was a little troubled by the fact that they depleted the food supply so quickly. Priscilla saw first-hand the level of poverty in the city and the importance of having a food bank to supplement the needs of people. This was a reminder for Priscilla that her upbringing was different from that of the people attending the Tail Gate.

Another highlight for Priscilla was attending the 107th anniversary of the local community church. Priscilla was raised Catholic, but did not profess to be devout in her religion. At first, she was a little uncomfortable, but relaxed once she was met by her community mentor. Priscilla felt comfortable with Mrs. O there to explain some of the happenings during the service and introduce her to church members. Attending the service showed Priscilla how important religion was to the community members. She witnessed the “call and response” interaction that is popular in African American churches. Priscilla had discussed this in class, but now witnessed

the power of this type of interaction and relevance as a strategy with African American students. She described the service as animated, much different from her home church.

Priscilla was able to delve into the community and gain a deeper understanding of the importance of stories. She participated in an oral history project with several community members, many of whom served as mentors to her peers. She interviewed community members and captured the stories of important events and recollections that shaped the community. Priscilla felt this was a very positive part of her experience and knew she would miss the community and the people when the semester ended.

Conceptualizing the experience. Priscilla approached the assignment of designing her conceptual framework with attention to detail. Each week she took time to reflect on her experiences, ask herself questions, and record this information on her mind map. She divided her mind map into the required sections, to ensure addressing each area. She added topics from class sessions, practicum, after-school, and community events that pertained to each section. Her digital rendering of the semester's journey not only raised questions, but provided answers. Over time, Priscilla realized the strong ties of the community, mobility of students, and how the community members were anxious to embrace her and her classmates.

One thing Priscilla wanted to occur with her conceptual framework, was that the process be organic and evolved naturally throughout the semester. During the fourth week, Priscilla decided to rework her original framework and include the five questions she considered the first week in practicum. This would allow her to make observations about experiences and generate a "mess of ideas." But in the end, Priscilla hoped that her ideas would result in an authentic representation of her journey, not one that was forced or dictated by a template.

In subsequent weeks, Priscilla expanded her framework to include a section on the community and the strong ties of people to each other. She added additional questions about the school, students, families, and the community. As she reflected on these questions, Priscilla became more in tune with the importance of her experiences and the connection to becoming a culturally relevant educator and more culturally competent. Eventually, Priscilla added photos and images that depicted her journey. She also strived to connect theory and practice, synthesizing what she learned.

Near the end of Priscilla's journey, she gave great consideration to how she would bring her conceptual framework to a close. She thought about "Things that I have learned and things that have made me smile," as an umbrella for her experiences to rest under. She incorporated student comments and her own thoughts, and responded to them with general and specific ideas. In the end, Priscilla was very proud of the work she did and how she was able to tell her story in words and pictures.

Becoming Priscilla. There are people who allow you to know their every thought and feeling through their verbal expressions. Others are more introspective in their thinking and processing of experiences. Priscilla was one of those persons who made meaning through deep, personal reflection. She took in the immersive learning experiences, reflected on them, and determined what it meant to her.

From the very beginning, Priscilla wrestled with her shyness and overcoming this in order to grow during the semester. She possessed the desire to work with CLD learners, but knew this experience would take her places she had not been. In an early reflection, Priscilla said,

"I was a little nervous at the start of the day....I did not know what to expect at Camp....I still felt rather shy and quiet with this group. I am an introvert, so I was not sure how the day,

filled with team-building activities, was going to be. As the day progressed, I soon realized that this group is incredible. The members of my group were so positive and helpful throughout every activity. Everyone gave all of their effort and was ready for any twist that came their way.”

In this setting, Priscilla learned that she could rely on her peers to support and that they were all in this together.

She also found a friend in her mentor, one who would help her process this experience with a listening ear and a wealth of knowledge. Priscilla wrote about her first encounter with her mentor:

“Meeting my mentor... was really exciting as well. She is so knowledgeable about the community and what’s happening in the area. When she was driving... she pointed out several houses or areas that used to be “Mom and Pop” shops or other important parts of the town....She described what it was like growing up there, giving us details about the store where her mother used to send her to buy various items, the interactions between neighbors, and where she went to school and what that was like....The clarity of her memories and her ability to explain them so well is stunning.”

Priscilla’s mentor would prove to be kind of person she could talk with, ask questions, and seek advice throughout the experience. She also felt her mentor could be helpful in Priscilla’s quest for opening up and overcoming her shyness. Priscilla wrote:

“[My mentor] impressed me so much during the time I spent with her. The way she carries herself and approaches others is inspiring. She has confidence and a strong sense of purpose. Each time that we walked into a building.... she firmly, but kindly, told them her name and why she was there. It may not have been anything complex, but the way she

handled herself was still very admirable. I respect that she is so positive and sure of herself. I want to work towards becoming that secure and self-assured. If I can get anywhere near her level of confidence after this program, I know I will have gained a lot this semester.”

The confidence displayed by her mentor was a model for the confidence she would need to display in the classroom for successful teaching. Priscilla realized this during her second lesson. In her reflection, Priscilla stated,

“I taught a lesson on fables. While teaching this lesson I realized some things that I do that I need to change and improve....For instance, near the middle of my lesson when I was transitioning from the whole-class instruction to individual time for writing, I asked the students if they were ready to write or not. Immediately I regretted saying this. This made it seem as if they could choose whether or not they were ready to write, thus giving them the option. Discussing it....helped me solidify my understanding of how I could have altered this type of situation for the future. I need to state that it is time for everyone to write their own fables and simply ask if there are any questions.”

Because of her community mentor, Priscilla had a model for asserting herself that communicated her point in a culturally responsive way.

When Priscilla visited the local church, she witnessed a powerful teaching technique. It had been discussed in class, but actually seeing it in action brought relevance to the concept of call and response. Priscilla commented on what she witnessed, while sitting beside her mentor,

“The call-response concept was very prevalent during the service; if someone strongly agreed with what [the pastor] said, she would make it clear. Attending church reinforced the significance of religion in this community for me”

Seeing so many students from school at church heightened Priscilla's awareness to what students were familiar with and gave answers to why some children responded in the classroom in different ways.

During Priscilla's time in the immersive learning program, she blossomed. In the beginning, she remained quiet and shy by nature, but grew in her knowledge of CRP and being able to connect with students who were culturally different from her. As time for the semester grew nearer, Priscilla became even more introspective about the prospect of leaving her students. She didn't want the time to come to a close. Her journal entry stated,

"I am not ready for this semester to be done, and I was not ready for the last day with my students. I cannot wait to see some of them again at [after-school]It seems like every semester passes more quickly than the last one....Thinking about leaving the...center and [community] is really sad, and I hope that I can volunteer at [after-school] next semester too. I want to stay in touch with these kids; it does not seem right to just leave them when the semester is done."

The experiences and lasting impressions of the immersive learning experience would remain with Priscilla. Not only did she gain the knowledge and skills needed to be a culturally relevant teacher, but she gained the confidence to teach in an environment where she was challenged by students, but managed to make a difference in the lives of others. Reflecting on her last day said it best:

"I passed out our cards (containing letters to them and pictures of us with them) to the kids....I read most of them to the students, but some could read them individually. I was getting hugs from all different directions, and several times I felt like I was going to cry....a boy that gives me hugs every day, came up to me and said that he had to give me a big hug

now just in case he did not have a chance later. He gave me such a tight, long hug, and it was so sweet. It felt like he did not want to let go, which made it that much more touching. Even though he tries to put up a tough exterior, it is clear that he, along with any other child, truly wants that personal connection and affection.”

During the semester, Priscilla was able to overcome her shyness and allow herself to be an active participant in the immersive learning experience. She acknowledged the difficulties of being uncomfortable in new settings and having her beliefs challenged. She opened herself to learning and fully engaged in the class discussions, the school setting, and community activities. She was able to walk away at the semester’s end with new and helpful insights about CRP and cultural competence.

Not only did Priscilla impart knowledge upon her students, she listened and learned from them. Her “take-away” from the immersive learning experience included seeing the connections between home, school, and community. She once viewed these as separate, but post-experience she witnessed the undeniable links between the three. Priscilla also noted the depth of the relationship between home, school, and community, and the importance of tapping into them to meet the needs of all students in her classroom.

Four Stories. The four participants learned a great deal through their immersive learning experience. They were challenged by their coursework, anxious to try their wings at teaching, and valued the wisdom of community members. Each participant entered into their experience from a different avenue, but all four were on the journey to becoming culturally competent educators. Each demonstrated growth in their understanding of CRP and cultural competence, as evidenced by their planning of lessons, teaching, and reflecting on their practice. The added opportunity for community-based learning environment engaged them in much more than a

traditional practicum experience. This additional layer provided the opportunity to improve their teaching skills, understand student learning, and walk away with a greater appreciation for the surrounding community.

Summary

The data in this chapter was gathered to examine the impact of immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers. Teacher candidates representing both genders, different races, and varied socioeconomic levels were studied. Qualitative analyses generated the following findings:

- 1) The elementary school served as a laboratory for preservice teachers to observe, plan, teach, and synthesize information about CRP, thus putting theory into practice, under the guidance master teachers.
- 2) Participation in the after-school program provided additional opportunities to practice CRP with freedom and flexibility outside the school setting.
- 3) Coursework challenged participants to build a foundation for CRP and cultural competence.
- 4) Impact on learning about CRP was not limited to teachers who were White or non-White.
- 5) The college classroom, situated within the community, provided a context for the community and atmosphere for learning to take place.
- 6) The immersive learning experience lent itself to more seamless cycle of teaching, learning, and reflection, when situated within the community.
- 7) Opportunities for engagement in the community, outside the required coursework, deepened the preservice teachers' understanding and appreciation for the community.

- 8) The cohort group of preservice teachers grew into a community of learners, connected by their experiences and relationships built during the semester.
- 9) The preservice teachers developed deeper relationships with peers and professors than in the traditional, often segmented campus classroom experience.
- 10) University professors modeled the importance of teamwork, provided support, and created a caring, safe, learning environment.
- 11) Significant time in the classroom allowed preservice teachers to establish and build meaningful relationships with students in the school setting.
- 12) Preservice teachers listened to the students and families of the community and provided meaningful experiences based on their interests, incorporating CRP.
- 13) Community mentors played a significant role in bridging the gap between preservice teachers and the community. They provided voice for the values and beliefs of the community and added richness to the experience through relationships.
- 14) Personal investment in the process yields higher rewards and a greater depth to the immersive learning experience.

These findings and themes that emerged from the data are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This chapter contains the summary of this investigation, conclusions, and recommendations for further research. The summary includes the purpose of the study, background, procedures, findings, and limitations of the study. Conclusions, which may be drawn from this study, are also included in this chapter, along with recommendations for the application of these findings, and needs for further research.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first objective was to examine how preservice teachers who are engaged in an immersive learning experience, implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The second was to understand how interacting with the greater local community strengthens preservice teachers' ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP).

Background

The review of literature included the history of CRP, increased diversity in schools, lack of diversity in preservice teachers, the widening achievement gap, the increased need for teachers in high-needs areas, perceptions of preservice teachers, and preparation of preservice teachers. Also included were immersive learning experiences, current success with CRP, implications for teacher preparation, and further exploration of CRP.

The literature provides a context for the need of CRP in schools to better serve CLD learners. Further research in the area of teacher preparation for working with CLD learners is needed. Exploration of innovative experiences, which are not limited to the four walls of a

college classroom, should be closely examined, in order to build solid teacher preparation programs. Therefore, this study focused attention on this area of teacher preparation.

Procedures

Two research questions were formulated for this qualitative study. The questions were: 1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher's understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy? 2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher's ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?

Participants for the case studies were selected from a sample of convenience of preservice teachers in a specific, immersive learning experience (SCC 2012). Data were collected through qualitative interviews, observations, and course artifacts generated by participants. Interviews were transcribed and coded using qualitative analyses. Cases were written and analyzed within and across studies to identify unique and common experiences.

Findings

Analysis of the data for immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers revealed many insights into the implementation of immersive learning for teacher preparation. Data from the participants provided thick descriptions of each and illuminated their insights about CRP and cultural competence. Several themes emerged from the data that provided a framework for the findings. The data indicated that school experience, community, and relationships were critical to the success of immersive learning. The themes have a strong presence in the data, but it is the multiple contexts that truly add to the power of these. The themes are like the three legs of an equilateral triangle. Each leg (school, community, relationships) has significance on its own, but

when placed together, they connect and provide a rich experience in multiple settings and through multiple lenses that lead preservice teachers to a deeper level of understanding. Opportunities to participate and immerse themselves in multiple contexts throughout the semester, led to the participants' articulation of their growth and learning about CRP and cultural competence. The key findings are divided into categories related to each theme for discussion purposes.

School. Participants in the SCC immersive learning experience spent significant time in the school setting, planning and teaching lessons, observing master teachers, and implementing CRP. Throughout their experience, the elementary classroom and after-school setting became places to synthesize information learned through their coursework. Three major findings that indicate the importance of the school setting were identified.

The first finding indicated the elementary school served as a laboratory for preservice teachers to observe, plan, teach, and synthesize information about CRP, thus putting theory into practice, under the guidance of master teachers. Each preservice teacher had the opportunity to be in an elementary classroom throughout the immersive learning experience, teaching and learning about CRP and cultural competence. The participants spent four days per week, interacting with students and applying what they learned in class to their teaching. This substantial amount of quality time in classrooms with CLD learners allowed the preservice teachers to study the elementary curriculum and include culturally relevant strategies and the CLD perspective. Banks, Cookson, Gay, Hawley, Irvine, Nieto, Schofield, and Stephan (2001) discussed the importance of perspectives in curriculum and teaching units. Most historical events are presented from a White point of view. According to Banks, et al., perspectives of CLD individuals, "are frequently silenced, ignored, or marginalized.... This kind of teaching

privileges mainstream students...and causes many students of color to feel left out of the American story” (p. 198). Teaching African American students necessitates the infusion of CRP and presenting information that includes their viewpoint and provided voice in the curriculum.

The participants also needed to consider perspective in the area of assessment. In their teaching and learning, the preservice teachers wrestled with assessment and discussed the topic in class. They expressed their belief that some assessments were unfair and biased against children of color. Therefore, in selecting assessment instruments, preservice teachers need to, “go beyond traditional measures...and include consideration of complex cognitive and social skills” (Banks, et al, 2001, p. 202). In a multicultural society, meaningful citizenship requires persons who value and promote equality and justice among CLD learners. The school-university collaboration served as a vital measure in reforming teacher preparation. This restructured program design provided a better model for connecting theory with practice (Sleeter, 2001). Through collaboration between the university and elementary school, preservice teachers learned valuable information about assessment and developed skills they could actually take into future classrooms.

The second finding showed participation in the after-school program provided additional opportunities to practice CRP with freedom and flexibility outside the school setting. In the preparation of preservice teachers, there must be multiple opportunities to practice CRP and develop cultural competence, if teachers are to gain a solid understanding for successful implementation. The classroom setting should not be the sole arena for implementing CRP. Banks, et al., identified a significant body of research, “that supports the proposition that participation in after-school programs, sports activities, academic clubs, and school-sponsored social activities contributes to academic performance, reduces dropout rates and discipline

problems, and enhances interpersonal skills among students from different ethnic backgrounds” (p. 200). Gutierrez (1999) echoed this sentiment in her work, proposing that non-formal learning situations (e.g., afterschool programs) are helpful in bridging the home and school cultures for students from diverse groups. Data from participants showed their ability to make additional cultural connections with students through their work in the after-school program. Each participant tutored a student during their after-school experience, preparing lessons that addressed specific needs in reading. Researchers have identified the value in preservice teachers tutoring children in non-White, middle-class settings for growth (Aaronsohn, Carter, & Howell, 1995; Sleeter, 2001). Thus, the additional time of tutoring CLD students was beneficial to the process of strengthening CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers.

The third finding pertained to the importance of coursework. Preservice teachers noted that coursework challenged them to build a foundation for CRP and cultural competence. Researchers have indicated the need for teacher preparation programs to include content and curriculum that provide preservice teachers with critical foundational pieces. Williams (2011) stated, “programs need to utilize evidence-based practices in order to produce highly effective K-12 teachers that recognize and understand the teaching techniques that can lead to increased achievement” (p. 69). For many universities this requires fundamental changes within the current curriculum. Change in curriculum must be coupled with teacher competence. Williams further stated, “in order for a teacher to feel the motivation to make change in the classroom, the teacher first needs to feel competent that he or she can effect a change on the students” (p. 68). Banks et al. found that increasing learning opportunities for students stemmed from a solid foundation in social and cultural contexts of teaching and learning. Thus, learning about student backgrounds had a definite impact on teacher effectiveness. Banks et al. further stated that teachers should

learn about stereotyping and biases that have negative effects on relationships, and learn how to perceive, understand, and respond to cultural groups in various settings. It is also important for teachers to employ multiple strategies and skills that are culturally sensitive. The immersive learning course content covered a range of topics that built the preservice teachers' knowledge in the areas of teaching, assessment, and understanding the needs of CLD learners.

Finally, the impact on learning about CRP was not skewed in either direction toward teachers who were White or non-White. Participants for this study were African American and White; both genders were represented. Sleeter (2001) stated “preservice students of color bring a richer multicultural knowledge base to teacher education than do White students” (p. 95). This stems from a commitment to multicultural teaching and taking a social justice stance. In all cases, the participants grew in their understanding of CRP and cultural competence. Starting the experience, each brought a level of understanding as to what teaching and learning should look like in a CLD setting. Throughout the semester, participants were able to gain new knowledge through their coursework and interaction in the school setting. The data did not indicate that any participant failed to reach new levels of understanding and improved teaching in diverse settings. Therefore, it is important for both White and non-White preservice teachers to learn through “well-designed preservice teacher education” (p. 95).

Community. The community served a vital role in the growth and development of the participants. They were immersed in the community setting for their class meetings, practicum, and interaction with community mentors. Findings from this study indicated three important ways the community supported the preservice teachers' ability to understand CRP and cultural competence. First and foremost, the college classroom, situated within the community, provided a context for the community and atmosphere for learning to take place. Participants were

constantly reminded of their surroundings and with whom they were working. The community center was not only the “college classroom,” but also home to the after-school program.

Participants had access to materials they needed for planning and teaching. This was critical for the participants in this case because of the long-term effects. According to Sleeter, learning situated within the context of community has the potential for very positive impacts on preservice teachers attitudes, knowledge, and future employment in CLD settings.

Coursework and field experience, within the community, has had significant impact on preservice teachers (Sleeter, 2001). The university-school collaboration has the potential to teach “skills that teachers will actually use in the classroom” (p. 101) Sociocultural theories support the idea of learning opportunities being maximized when situated in the right context. Wang (2007) stated that when one views sociocultural theories within the real world, “it is not hard to understand that learning is embedded in a social and cultural context” (p.151). Therefore, when learning, “is embedded within social events...social interaction plays a fundamental role in the improvement of learning” (p. 151).

Secondly, the immersive learning experience lent itself to a more seamless cycle of teaching, learning, and reflection, when situated within the community. Vygotsky’s theory of sociocultural learning was developed with children in mind. However, institutions of higher education can apply this to teacher preparation. Wang stated collaborative learning allows students to, “interact with learning tools and other members in group activities; they express and conceptualize their viewpoints and also listen to others in order to solve problems, to complete their tasks, or to generate new ideas” (p. 151). The immersive learning experience provided a seamless atmosphere for preservice teachers to plan, teach, and reflect in the same setting.

Sleeter (2001) attributed students' learning to, "the power of community-based, cross-cultural contexts in which they have to grapple with being in the minority, do not necessarily know how to act, and are temporarily unable to retreat to the comfort of a culturally familiar setting" (p. 97). These feelings of disequilibrium for preservice teachers are critical to their development of the needed knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective CRP and cultural competence.

Opportunities for engagement in the community, outside the required coursework, deepened the preservice teachers' understanding and appreciation for the community. Throughout the experience, participants immersed themselves in community activities. They attended everything from school open house, to food bank distributions, to worshipping in the local church. These opportunities to interact with community members and at various events further socialized their learning and deepened understandings of teaching and learning. Social cultural theorists state, "the more students engage in group activities and interact...the better they will learn" (Wang, 2007, p. 155). Through participation and discussion, the participants built on each other's contributions, reconstructed new knowledge, and enhanced their own thinking process.

Relationships. The third theme that emerged from the data collected in this study was that of relationships and their critical contributions to the overall experience. The findings suggested that relationships enriched the experience and added to the depth of the preservice teachers' learning opportunities. The first type of relationship that was important to the participants was the peer-to-peer connection. The cohort group of preservice teachers grew into a community of learners, connected by their experiences and daily interactions during the semester. As a community of learners, the participants learned about teambuilding, tackled course content, planned and taught lessons, and maintained transparency when discussing difficult topics (e.g.,

racism and prejudice). Throughout the semester, they discovered similarities and differences in their own cultures and grew into a cohesive group, bonded by their experiences.

Banks et al. (2001) discussed how intergroup relations improved when superordinate group memberships became salient. The SCC provided the participants with opportunities to form a superordinate group, or “groups with which members of other groups in a given situation identify” (p. 200). Membership in a superordinate group shifts the focus away from smaller ones (e.g., cliques, circles of friends), making them seem less important. This was important for the participants, because of the need for openness in class discussions and the level of collaboration required. Participants who were members of other groups solidified one superordinate group of preservice teachers who were working toward a common goal. Achieving the goal required students to, “take on the role of collaborative community members” (Wang, 2007, p. 152). In a collaborative setting, participants engaged in brainstorming, listened to others, and discussed information, in order to find the best solutions and complete tasks.

Participants had a voice in the classroom that was heard and respected. This was especially important for preservice teachers of color, who are often silenced in the college classroom setting. Researchers have identified this concept of “falling silent” as a very real problem in teacher preparation. For example, Burant (1999) examined the process of a Latina preservice teacher being silenced by her peers' lack of interest and understanding of multicultural issues. Because of the collaborative atmosphere and efforts to solidify bonds between the participants, voices were heard and respected in the college classroom. Ultimately, the preservice teachers developed deeper relationships with peers and professors than in the traditional, often segmented campus classroom experience. They expressed their feelings of connectedness with professors early in their experience, and continued to build relationships with

one another, as they collaborated on various projects throughout the semester. In a collaborative peer group, the more engagement in group activities and interactions, the better they will learn.

The depth of relationships and the positive nature of participants' experience were attributed to the second type of relationship, which was modeled by their professors. The University professors demonstrated the importance of teamwork, provided support, and created a caring, safe, learning environment. This atmosphere was very much in line with what a culturally competent teacher's classroom is like. This was critical to the participants gaining confidence and becoming culturally competent.

According to Wang, the professor's role in an adult learning setting is to, "become the facilitator whose responsibility is to create a climate to foster collaborative learning" (p. 152). They guided the preservice teachers through the semester and intervened when needed. They provided critical scaffolding of the preservice teachers in order to "guide them to complete tasks or to solve problems that would not be completed or solved without experienced peers' [teachers] assistance" (p. 152).

An important role of the professors during group discussions was monitoring the flow, then providing guidance and feedback to meet the needs of participants. This occurred most frequently during the weekly Courageous Conversations and other class discussions of content. In order for participants to reach the next level in their learning, they required scaffolding from their professors. Researchers have found the importance of this type of support for individuals as they process information (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

The team of professors modeled the tenets of CRP for the participants in the design of the immersive learning experience and in their facilitation of activities. DeCuir-Gunby, Taliaferro, and Greenfield (2010) articulated the three tenets of CRP as promoting academic success, the

importance of cultural competence, and development of critical consciousness. The team of professors supported the academic success of participants by communicating clear expectations, providing feedback on their lesson plans, teaching, and other assignments. Their feedback gave value to their work participants were doing and helped them with the second tenet of cultural competence. Participants grew in their understanding of cultural competence through the weekly Courageous Conversations, their time in the classrooms, and the required readings, assigned by their professors. Much reflection came from the readings and talking about what participants experienced in the classroom.

The third tenet of CRP, development of critical consciousness, was exemplified through the range of experiences professors provided for the participants. Critical consciousness reaches far beyond the individual and personal achievement. It is essential to promoting social justice, and “involves educators helping students to see themselves as members of a global community” (p. 186). Because of the relationships between professors and students, participants were able to question injustices CLD learners and formulate viable solutions under the guidance of supportive, knowledgeable experts.

Significant time in the classroom allowed preservice teachers to establish and build meaningful relationships with students in the school setting. Participants greeted students upon their arrival, took time to learn names and special information about each child, and took a genuine interest in them, especially when students were troubled. Continuity of the overall experience was enhanced by the participants spending four days a week in the classroom setting. They were able to get to know the students in their classrooms; the students were able to learn more about the participants.

The third and final relationship that emerged from the findings was that of preservice teachers and members of the school and greater community. In these relationships, the art of listening became critical to the experiences and growth of participants. Preservice teachers listened to the students and families of the community and provided meaningful experiences based on their interests, while incorporating CRP. Williams (2011) found that affirmation of CLD learners, by letting their voices be heard, can lead to increased student achievement. This work revealed that when students are affirmed in “their sense of themselves and feel valued, their achievement increases in schools” (p. 67).

The participants listened to the staff of the after-school program when making decisions about their final *Dreams* unit. They also listened to the students when teaching the unit, adding value to their hopes and aspirations and included opportunities for the voices of families to be heard in this very important project. Numerous studies have found that there is great value and considerable learning takes place when participants in cross-cultural immersion projects listen and learn from the community (Canning, 1995; Marxen & Rudney, 1999). Therefore, participants learned the value of listening as it opened doors to building relationships.

The wisdom and personal relationships of the mentors was also important to the participants. Lave & Wenger (1991) refer to these relationships between participants and mentors as apprenticeship learning. Historically, apprenticeships have lent themselves to significant learning, “especially wherever high levels of knowledge and skill are in demand” (p. 63). These apprenticeships account for learning that occurs through legitimate peripheral participation. The one-on-one talks, neighborhood tour, and feedback on multicultural literature proved invaluable for the growth and understanding of participants. Many mentors invited the participants to church, their homes, and to attend key community events. Participants valued the time

community mentors devoted to making their experience richer. Yeo (1997) conducted a study of community-based cross-cultural immersion programs and discovered the importance of listening to inner-city students and residents. Their perspective was essential to the cross-cultural experience. Community mentors played a significant role in bridging the gap between preservice teachers and the community. They provided voice for the values and beliefs of the community and added richness to the experience through relationships.

Participants expressed initial apprehension and some fear about meeting their mentors, wondering how they would get along, what their mentors would think about them. Banks, et al. (2001) stated that fears among groups, particularly those who are culturally different from one another, can stem from threats—both realistic and symbolic (p. 201). Overcoming these fears must be facilitated. The researchers stated “the contexts in which interactions between groups takes place should be relatively structured...Stressing the similarities in the values of the groups should also reduce the degree of symbolic threat [fear]” (p. 201). By semester’s end, participants overcame the fears and anxieties associated with establishing new relationships and developed strong ties to persons who served as guides as they navigated through the immersive learning semester. The mentors provided the preservice teachers with highly significant sources of learning.

Personal investment in the process yielded higher rewards and a greater depth to the immersive learning experience. The four participants included in this study invested time and energy to complete the program. The level of personal investment varied among participants. Their personal reflections indicated how they connected to the community, the families, and students they encountered. One participant was unable to engage in many activities outside of the required coursework, practicum, and after-school experience. A second participant truly

embraced the experience and found she wanted to be a member of the community, as she worshipped alongside community members and took a job in the community. A third participant stepped outside her comfort zone in order to attend community events and get a glimpse of the inner workings. She felt much more secure when she attended events with her mentor or peers, and found the risk of being uncomfortable outweighed what she learned. The fourth participant reflected on each experience with a depth of knowledge that allowed her to reach new heights. She dissected each experience, noting what she observed, whom she interacted with, and how this information applied to the current semester and her future as an educator. Wang (2007) found it was important for individuals to engage in sociocultural opportunities, particularly as adult learners. Socialized learning adds to the depth of understanding. Therefore, taking advantage of opportunities to engage and interact allowed participants to “reconstruct their new knowledge and, therefore, construct their own thinking process” (p. 155). This personal construction of their thinking moved participants to deeper understandings about CRP and cultural competence.

The findings bring to light the importance of participation in social practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) stated that, “learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world” (p. 49). The school setting, community, and different types of relationships formed throughout the immersive learning experience, allowed the participants to have greater opportunities to increase their knowledge. The multiple contexts in which the participants immersed themselves made a significant difference in their process of learning. There was not a narrow, limited, replicative practice. The immersive experience was more than an independent process, “that just happened to be located somewhere” (Lave & Wenger, p. 35). In accord with Lave and Wenger’s framework, the experience entailed legitimate

peripheral participation, where learners are engaged in, “social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent” (p. 35). When learners’ peripherality is enabled, they gain access to sources. This access furthers the individuals’ understanding, through their continual involvement in their surroundings.

As illustrated in Chapter 4, multiple data sources support the answering of both research questions.

1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher’s understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy?

- Data from the participants’ interviews and journals showed their coursework guided them toward better understanding of CRP
- Data showed the participants’ journals indicated they were able to observe and interact with teachers who implemented CRP lessons.
- Data from participants’ interviews and observations showed their thinking and perceptions about CLD learners were challenged during the experience.
- Data from participants’ lesson plans and interviews showed that lessons continued to incorporate strategies of CRP as their knowledge increased during the semester.
- Data from participants’ interviews and journals revealed that their career choices and desire to work with CLD learners were affirmed during the immersive experience.

2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher’s ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?

- Data from participants’ interviews and journals revealed that conversations with community mentors increased their knowledge of students and families.

- Data from participants' journals showed that community mentors were critical in identifying appropriate resources that were culturally relevant.
- Data from participants' journals and interviews indicated that community members' voice provided valuable guidance in planning and teaching culturally relevant activities.

Limitations of the Study

Generalization and transferability of knowledge of this study was limited by the following:

- 1) The setting was one school in a particular community, which means that it was not representative of all schools. Additionally, this immersive learning experience was part of one, Midwestern university's teacher preparation program. The setting for the experience was limited to one elementary school, within a specific community. The school's demographics are not unique; there are other schools within the state and nation that are similar. However, the demographics are in no way representative *all* schools. The findings pertain to this specific school, but can serve as the basis for similar schools in raising questions and exploring CRP and cultural competence with preservice teachers.
- 2) This was a sample of convenience; participants were not randomly assigned. Participants were limited to the cohort group who participated in SCC during the semester of this study. The number of potential participants was 24 (23 females; 1 male). Selection criteria for participants included the participation in SCC. Individuals outside the SCC experience could not be selected.
- 3) Participation in immersive learning experiences was voluntary; participants were interviewed by faculty members, and officially accepted into the program. Immersive learning experiences are not part of the general teacher education program. Those who wish to

participate in SCC must apply, be interviewed by a panel of professors, and receive formal notification of acceptance. The preservice teachers in the program already had an interest in participating in an intensive, community-based, urban experience.

- 4) Observations were limited to the length of the lesson being taught by the participant.

Classroom observations and those during after-school tutoring were limited to the length of the required lesson. Participants planned and taught lessons, following the course guidelines. They were observed during their teaching time. Observations of other teaching, were not included in the observations. This limited the opportunities to see how the participants handled informal teaching or extended periods of classroom time.

- 5) The length of the immersive experience was one semester. Analysis of the long-term effects requires additional time. The immersive learning experience is limited to one semester per year (Fall). Participants are officially immersed in the school and community during the fifteen-week period. Although participants are open to continuing their work in the community, the official obligations end at the close of the semester. Long-term analysis of the preservice teachers' experiences requires additional time in the SCC setting.

Conclusions

The findings of this study regarding immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers lead to the following conclusions:

- 1) Preservice teachers benefit from immersive learning experiences when they are developing knowledge and skills in the areas of CRP and cultural competence. Developing an understanding of CRP and cultural competence takes time and practice. In order to build a firm foundation for preservice teachers, the stand-alone course in multicultural education is

not as effective as other models. By situating learning within the context of the community, preservice teachers have opportunities to see, hear, and immerse themselves in their surroundings. The SCC model for immersive learning provided preservice teachers with access to the community and multiple opportunities for participation in meaningful activities *within* the community. They also had the privilege of working alongside community members as they developed skills and discovered new insights.

- 2) The conceptual framework is a powerful tool that facilitates reflection on practice and experiences. Preservice teachers create a visual journey as they wrestle with new learning and feelings of disequilibrium. When an individual enters into an experience, they bring a prior schema. During their experience, individuals are confronted with new information and have to wrestle with how the new and old come together. The new learning leads to “take-aways” from the experience that ultimately has guided the individual to a different level of understanding. The participants in this study used the conceptual framework as a digital chronology of their experience. They documented their experience with questions, reflections, photos, and other artifacts that represented their journey. The open-ended nature of this assignment encouraged preservice teachers to be frank and honest about their thoughts and feelings, as they made meaning of the experience.
- 3) Community mentors are a vital resource for preservice teachers as they navigate through the experience, and work toward becoming culturally competent. Mentors serve as guides, sources of knowledge and expertise. They also provide advice and a listening ear. Mentors are common in the field of education to new teachers and in other professional settings. The power of the community mentor-preservice teacher relationship was providing the community voice and support for future teachers. Mentors provided access to areas of the

community, which might be closed to an “outsider.” The community mentors welcomed the preservice teachers, provided relevant stories, and accompanied them to community events. Because of their respected positions and knowledge of community, mentors were comfortable speaking about history and sharing information with their mentees. Inclusion of an additional support person (i.e., mentor) can give the preservice teachers another source of information.

- 4) Community engagement deepens the level of understanding of students and families, allowing preservice teachers to recognize the significance of cultural connections to teaching and learning in the classroom. For example, learning to play a sport, solely through observation, is far less effective than actually participating. Learners need to interact with others to truly experience the sport. The same may be said for understanding a community and its residents. Through the preservice teachers’ participatory role, they had more opportunities to live and breathe the experience. They witnessed firsthand how students and families function within the community and some of the ways students learned best in informal settings. Observing students in church, community events, and the after-school program formed relationships and provided insight about students learning styles. Relationships established outside a formal school setting can lead to greater levels of trust. Preservice teachers were seen as helpful, not harmful. The information gained at community events could not be learned in the school setting.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

Based on the findings from this study, the following implications for teacher preparation are suggested:

- 1) As schools continue to grow in terms of diverse populations, the need for culturally competent teachers increases. The achievement gap continues to widen between CLD and White students. Teacher preparation should include understanding of why the gap exists and how to implement strategies that will lessen it.
- 2) Colleges and universities must review their current practices for preparing teachers to work with CLD learners. CRP should be embedded into course content throughout teacher preparation programs, with opportunities to practice and implement strategies in classrooms.
- 3) Exploration into the kinds of experiences and the depth of such with CLD learners must be made. Traditional multicultural courses are not sufficient training for preparing culturally competent educators. Teacher candidates need to spend significant amounts of time in school settings with CLD learners. There also need to be community-based experiences in which situated learning can occur.
- 4) Efforts to strengthen preservice teachers understanding of CRP has to be implemented in teacher preparation programs. Schools of Education cannot remain stagnant in their content and pedagogical practices. The student population has become more diverse and requires educators to teach in ways that respond to the culture of the students. If colleges and universities fail to acknowledge the increased diversity and prepare teachers, status quo, significant numbers of students may not be taught in ways that will help them achieve.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study examining immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers the recommendations for further research are as follows:

- 1) This study could be replicated over a longer period of time (i.e., multiple semesters) to follow participants through program completion and into their first year of teaching. The understanding of CRP and cultural competence has become critical to changing classrooms. Increased presence of CLD learners makes CRP more important. Researchers have found content from multicultural education courses, CRP, and cultural competence are often lost in the first years of teaching because new teachers struggle to address so many other professional obligations (Sleeter, 2001). An important aspect of research would be to follow preservice teachers through their program completion and into their first year of teaching. This would allow researchers to see the application of what was learned during the immersive learning experience.
- 2) This study could be replicated using participants in several cohort groups to compare the program's effectiveness over several semesters. This immersive learning experience has been in existence for five semesters. The university faculty who have designed and taught the program have collected some data from the preservice teachers. The team has published articles about the successes and new learning they have encountered. Qualitative data, such as case studies of participants, would add value and possibly provide information that has not been accessed. Analyzing data from separate groups to compare experiences between them would be helpful. The faculty team could look at program components from semester to semester to see which have the greatest impact on CRP and cultural competence.

- 3) The study could be replicated to include follow-up with participants as to where they decide to teach. The participants were presented with a wealth of information concerning CRP and cultural competence. They had multiple opportunities to teach and interact with CLD learners. Their semester focused on community-based teaching and learning and the benefits of such. Following up with participants would be beneficial to see if the immersive learning experience played a significant role in their selection and acceptance of a teaching position. This information would be beneficial to those faculty who prepare teachers using community-based programs that focus on CRP and cultural competence.
- 4) This study could be replicated to examine the impact of this experience on secondary preservice teachers. Preservice teachers spend time in schools observing, teaching, and learning how to be effective educators. Elementary preservice teachers have multiple practicum experiences, covering content areas. They deal with one group of students during the school day. Secondary preservice teachers have several sections of students they see during the day, and the potential for teaching more CLD learners. It would be interesting to learn from secondary educators how they handle CRP and cultural competence in an immersive learning experience, particularly if their experience is compared with those who took a single multicultural course.
- 5) This study could be replicated using participants from similar programs at different institutions, in order to refine and improve teacher preparation. The immersive learning experience used for this study was one program at a Midwestern university. Other institutions have implemented community-based experiences at varying levels as a means to fostering CRP and cultural competence in preservice teachers. Utilizing case studies on preservice teachers who are engaged in various community-based teacher education

initiatives, may provide insight into key experiences that encourage and support transformation into culturally competent educators. Accreditation offers institutions of higher learning opportunities to assess program effectiveness in all areas. A study of exemplar community-based experiences would provide other institutions with data and insights that could aid them in better preparation of teachers for working with diverse learners.

- 6) This study could be replicated to examine CRP with other cultural groups. The focus of this immersive learning experience was with African American students, families, and the community. This is a minority group which accounts for a significant percentage of the school population, but other groups are growing in their numbers. Regional needs are often different, but it would be valuable to replicate the experience. Studies would provide valuable data if replicated in areas with Latina/Latino, Asian Pacific Islanders, and American Indians were present in significant numbers.

Preparing highly effective, excellent teachers is no small task. Ensuring that preservice teachers depart campuses with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach young learners, requires universities to be informed. They must stay abreast of current research and trends in education. Professors must provide preservice teachers with knowledge, skills, and pedagogical practices to address the ever-changing needs of students. The changing population and increase in CLD learners must be acknowledged and become a central focus of colleges and universities in their teacher preparation. Culturally relevant pedagogy is far from being a new concept, but has become more important as the population of our nation has changed. As teacher preparation programs look toward the future of schools and student

achievement, the central goal should be to prepare teachers with a deep commitment to CRP and demonstrating cultural competence in their classrooms.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

*for***TEACHER PREPARATION FOR A DIVERSE SOCIETY: IMMERSIVE LEARNING
EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY AS A MEANS OF
STRENGTHENING CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCE IN PRESERVICE TEACHERS**

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project titled “Teacher preparation for a diverse society: Immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural competence in preservice teachers.” This study is for my dissertation and completion of the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education. The study will begin in October 2012 and continue through May 2013.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first objective is to examine how preservice teachers, engaged in an immersive learning experience, within the context of community, implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in elementary classrooms. The second is to understand how interacting with the greater local community affects preservice teachers’ ability to understand CRP.

In order to participate, you must be a Ball State University preservice teacher, enrolled in the in the immersive learning program (Schools within the Context of Community (SCC) 2012); you must have junior or senior academic standing and be an elementary education major.

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like to conduct two or five interviews. Each interview will last no more than two hours, and be conducted at time and place that is convenient and agreeable to both of us. With your permission I would like to record each interview. In addition, I would like to observe you in the classroom and after school settings two to three times per week (Longfellow Elementary and MP3 program); review lesson plans you design and implement; review online journals and other online projects for this immersive experience; and talk with you in group settings (weekly “Courageous Conversations” and class discussions) .

Data are not considered anonymous, but confidential. No specific information will be reported that might reveal your identity or that of your school. You will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. The school, university, and community facilities will be assigned pseudonyms.

There are no foreseeable risks of injury or harm from participation in this study at this time. For your participation and assistance in completing this study, you will receive a gift card in the amount of \$50.00

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without penalty or prejudice from me, the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of me before signing this Informed Consent form, beginning the study, and at any time during or after the study.

All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the primary investigator's residence. Electronic (word processed) documents will be password protected, for access by the principal investigator. All interview notes, journal entries, and electronic recordings will be retained indefinitely, and locked in a filing cabinet. Should the data require disposal, all items will be shredded or incinerated by the investigator.

Although you may not benefit directly from participating in this study, your shared experiences will provide vital information and insight to my work and the future of teacher preparation. One benefit of the research is learning about preservice teachers and their understanding of culturally relevant pedagogical practices.

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu."

Thank you for your consideration to participating.

Rebekah I. Baker
Principal Investigator

Appendix C: Informed Consent Participant Signature Page**INFORMED CONSENT***for***TEACHER PREPARATION FOR A DIVERSE SOCIETY: IMMERSIVE LEARNING
EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY AS A MEANS OF
STRENGTHENING CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCE IN PRESERVICE TEACHERS**

I, _____, agree to participate in this research project
(Please print your first and last name.)

titled “Teacher preparation for a diverse society: Immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural competence in preservice teachers.” The study has been explained to me and questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this study and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep for future reference. I may withdraw my consent to participate and terminate participation at any time.

Criteria have been provided to me in both written and verbal formats. My signature acknowledges that I meet the inclusion criteria for participation provided in this study.

Please initial the following statements, verifying your eligibility to participate in this research project.

_____ I am preservice teacher at Ball State University.
 _____ I am enrolled in the Schools within the Context of Community (SCC) Immersive
 Learning Experience.
 _____ I am a junior or senior.
 _____ I am majoring in Elementary Education.

Participant's Signature

Date

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Appendix C: Pre and Post Observation Questions**Pre- observation interview:**

What is your objective for today's lesson?

How are you making the lesson culturally relevant for your students?

What will indicate successful CRP in your lesson?

Is there anything or in particular you want me to focus on during the lesson?

Post-observation journal/interview:

What went well?

How was your implementation of CRP received by the students?

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Introductory Script:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study, “Teacher preparation for a diverse society: Immersive learning experiences within the context of community as a means of strengthening culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural competence in preservice teachers. ”

I have your signed informed consent, but want to remind you that participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from participation at any time. We will be using your selected pseudonym throughout the study.

During the interview, I will be recording our conversation and taking some notes. If at any time you have questions, need clarification, or wish to stop, please let me know. This is interview (#) with (participant pseudonym) on (day, month, date, year).

Interview 1:

Tell me a little about yourself.

Talk about the community where you grew up.

How did you become interested in teaching as a profession?

What led you to being part of this immersive learning experience (SCC 2012)?

Describe what this experience is about.

Talk about your thoughts and feelings prior to the beginning of the semester.

Describe a typical day.

What were your impressions after the following?

- meeting your mentor
- touring the neighborhood
- touring the school

What is your understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP)?

Interview 2:

Talk about your feelings before beginning the practicum?

Impressions of the school?

Impressions of the after school program?

What have you noticed about the students in the different settings?

(i.e., classroom management, group dynamics, engagement, motivation)

What have you noticed about yourself in the two different settings?

What successes have you experienced?

Challenges?

How have you dealt with these?

Talk about your relationship with your community mentor?

How has this relationship developed throughout your experience?

Talk about the community events you have attended.

What role have these experiences played in your experience?

Describe the community literacy event.

- What impact did this event have on you as an individual?
- As a future teacher?

How are you using multicultural literature in your teaching?

How are you connecting with students?

How are you engaging students?

How are you feeling about the as this semester is coming to a close?

Interview 3:

Talk about the importance of community events.

Talk about the importance of having a community mentor.

What did you gain from the practicum experience?

- School?
- After school program?

How have you stayed connected with the community?

What has changed about you as a teacher? (e.g., Knowledge, skill, dispositions, beliefs)

Using three words for each, please describe the following:

- Yourself (pre-semester)
- The School
- After school program
- Your students
- Your mentor
- SCC
- Yourself (post-experience)